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## THESIS

**CONTINUATION OR EQUILIBRATION:  
THE ALGERIAN CONFLICT  
AND EUROPEAN SECURITY**

by

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Algeria is caught in a stalled political transition. In 1991, the ancien regime, lacking credibility in a time of crisis, was forced to open the political system to opposition groups. However, because the regime was unprepared for any substantial transfer of power, the electoral victory of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) led to a military coup, and a civil war pitting radical Islamists against a authoritarian regime.

Algeria's conflict has ramifications that travel far beyond its borders. Europe states rely upon Algerian natural gas for their energy needs, and are fearful of the impact of Islamic revivalism on their security situations. The result has been strong European support for the military regime, leading Algeria's radical Islamists to identify European states as co-belligerents.

Since neither the Algerian military nor the Islamic radicals have the might to achieve a military victory, the conflict can only be resolved through a political settlement. To protect its interests in North Africa, the West must ensure that the settlement offers the ability to participate to every political faction willing to forswear political violence. Endorsing the Platform of Rome, and accepting political Islam as a facet of civil society is the only way to bring peace to Algeria.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1991 Algeria was on the verge of a democratic transition. The state's economic distress had produced a series of riots that cost the government a great deal of legitimacy. For its own survival, the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) had little choice but to liberalize the political system. Events culminated in December 1991, when following the installation of a new constitution, Algeria held the first national multi-party election since its independence from France in 1962. Unfortunately, the democratic process was stillborn. Democratization was supposed to be a tool through which the FLN could regain its legitimacy, and the ruling elites had not envisioned the possibility of any real transfer of power. Thus, when the religious-based Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) overwhelmingly defeated the ruling FLN, the army forced President Chadli Benjedid to resign, and seized power in a bloodless coup. When Islamic groups protested this illegal usurpation of power the new regime arrested its leaders and granted extraordinary freedoms to the state's security apparatus under the pretext of maintaining order. Islamic-initiated violence soon emerged, and Algeria's experiment with democracy deteriorated into a bloody civil war. In the interim five years more than 50,000 people have died in this conflict.

Algeria's stalled transition carries ramifications that go far beyond the state's borders. For economic and political reasons, European states feel an Islamic Algeria would be a threat to their security. The Mediterranean states rely upon Algerian natural gas for its energy needs, while the entire continent fears the influx of refugees they expect to accompany the installation of an Islamic government. Thus Europe has been a significant factor during the course of the war. The economic and political support provided by key European countries has been instrumental in helping the military to resist domestic pressure.



During this period, the military became somewhat dependent upon this assistance. Since the government lacked electoral legitimacy, it needed the infusion of capital to maintain its hold on the people in light of the strong societal push. The relationship between the Algerian military and its European sponsors is one of symbiotic dependency. The military needs European support to survive, while Europe needs the military to stay in control to preserve the economic arrangement and prevent an exodus of refugees.

By 1995 however, four years of continual conflict had begun to affect the unity of Algeria's European supporters. Bosnia and the economic development of Eastern Europe were increasingly more important to the nations of Northern and Central Europe. When the FIS reached a national pact with the secular political opposition, the European coalition was in danger of collapsing. To persuade the international community to continue to fund its campaign against the Islamists, the Algeria military would have to establish its right to rule.

Thus in 1995, the military held elections for the Algerian presidency. The victor was retired General Liamine Zeroual, who had served as the junta's leader since 1993. However, while international observers declared the election to be fairly administered, it was far from free and its mandate was suspect. The FIS was banned from participating while its secular coalition partners refused to validate the legitimization of military rule. Political parties representing more than 80% of the electoral vote in the 1991 election failed to participate. Domestically there is a strong possibility that the vote was a protest against the deterioration of Algeria instead of an endorsement of military rule. Since the campaign's conclusion, the government has attempted to use its renewed international legitimacy to force the secular opposition to accept its plan for political equilibration while suppressing the FIS.

The government's plan is unlikely to succeed because it seeks to reinstate the old political system, which makes Europe's decision to support the regime questionable. Islam still has a strong hold on Algerian society and continued government suppression of the politically based FIS will not alter this arrangement. What it will affect however, is the balance between the moderate and the radical wing of the Islamic movement. Since the FIS is unable to achieve power through democracy and cooperation, the government's attempt to reinstitute the previous arrangement between state and society will only lead to increased support for the militant Islamists like the Armed Islamic Group (GIA).

As this thesis demonstrates, the FIS was always a moderate Islamic voice in Algeria, and its suppression only led to the further radicalization of the religious opposition. Europe opposed the democratic installation of an Islamic regime on its periphery for security reasons. However, as the commonplace assassination of European nationals in Algeria, and the summer 1995 Paris subway bombings demonstrate, this policy has actually increased Europe's security risks.

Europe must balance its long term interests against its short term needs. The only path that offers a chance for the conflict's resolution is the national pact reached by the FIS and Algeria's secular opposition in January 1995. The Platform of Rome committed signatories representing more than 85% percent of the electorate to a democratic Algeria. However, its proponents were unable to persuade the international community to cease support for the military government. France and its allies refused to approve any plan that offered a role for a political Islamic regime on its borders. Meanwhile, the United States has been reluctant to interfere in what it perceives to be Southern Europe's hegemonic sphere. The result of the international community's stance will be the continued deterioration of Algerian society, and the strengthening of the radical Islamic movement. In this lies the irony. Southern Europe backs the military



because it opposes any equilibration that offers a role for political Islam due to the fear of the resultant impact on domestic security. However, denying political Islam the ability to function as a part of civil society only strengthens the capabilities of the radical Islamists like the GIA that can bring Europe's fears to fruition.

## I. INTRODUCTION

*In most countries the state has its army, but in Algeria the army has its state*  
-Mohammed Harbi<sup>1</sup>

### A. ALGERIA AT THE CROSSROADS

In 1962, following a long and bloody struggle, the young revolutionaries of the National Liberation Front (FLN) won Algeria's independence from France. Promising to reverse a century of European domination, the revolutionary leadership struck a bargain with society in which the populace ceded its right for open political participation in return for efficacious rule. By the mid 1980s, this social contract was in jeopardy. The socialist dreams of the revolutionary leadership had given way to a bloated and parasitic state. Thirty years of inept rule had created a large gap between state and civil society. The general population viewed the FLN as an authoritarian elite that divided the state's spoils amongst itself to the detriment of society. Furthermore, sixty percent of the populace had been born after the nation's independence. Thus, the government could no longer rely upon its wartime mystique as a basis for legitimacy. In the rentier state Algeria had become, government survival was based solely on the ability to deliver goods and services.

When a worldwide recession hit in the mid 1980's, the international price of gas and oil dropped precipitously. The shock of this event had long term repercussions for Algeria. Oil and gas revenues provided the vast majority of the state's export revenue. When prices dropped, the state's elites were unable to maintain the patronage networks

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Robert Mortimer. "Algeria: The clash between Islam, Democracy, and the Military." *Current History*. (January 1993) p. 37.

that supported the party. To maintain their position, ruling elites would have to formulate a new basis for their rule. As Yahia Zoubir notes, "In order to survive, ruling elites decided to open the political system, making it easier to control the social and political movements opposed to them than would have been possible through sheer repression."<sup>2</sup> This was the motivation behind President Chadli Benjedid's decision to allow open and democratic elections for the first time in Algeria's history. If the ruling elites could use the democratic process to regain their legitimacy, then they could successfully withstand societal demands.

Unfortunately for the government, democratization in Algeria produced unexpected results. Factionalization within the FLN and unanticipated societal strength brought the real possibility that control of the national government could pass from the FLN to the newly formed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). This transfer of power was too much for the military to accept. As one of the nation's most secular and Franco-phone institutions, the army would not accept any government that threatened its special place in Algeria. Islamic rule would have meant its demise. Thus, "the army, which had declared itself the guardian of democracy and modernity. . . moved directly and forcefully into the political arena, removing Benjedid in January 1992 and worked behind a civilian facade to restore the presence, authority, and legitimacy of the state."<sup>3</sup> The President's term would

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<sup>2</sup> Yahia Zoubir. "The Painful Transition From Authoritarianism in Algeria." *Arab Studies Quarterly*. (Vol. 15 no 3 Summer 1993) p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Azzedine Layachi. "Algeria: Reinstating the State or Instating a Civil Society." in William Zartman, ed. *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995): 182.

be completed by an army-dominated High State Council (HCE), while the government attempted to find a way to liberalize the country with no actual transfer of power.

Meanwhile, the military tried and imprisoned the FIS's leadership on charges ranging from inciting riots to high treason.<sup>4</sup>

With their leadership imprisoned, and their electoral victory denied, it was not long before the Islamic supporters of the FIS responded with violence. When the government responded in kind, Algeria began to spin out of control. Radical groups aligned with the cause, but not under the control of either side, quickly emerged. Paramilitary death squads and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) attacked each other's sponsors, and civilians alike. In the last four years, more than fifty thousand Algerians have been killed. In the words of Azzedine Layachi, "Algeria's authority and legitimacy diminished. . .to the point where the state was nearing collapse."<sup>5</sup>

### **1. European Concerns**

The possibility of state collapse in Algeria had repercussions that spread well beyond its borders. Since the beginning of the modern historical era, Europe and North Africa have been inexorably linked. From the establishment of trade routes during the Middle Ages to the colonial development of the 19th century, events in one region had a strong impact on the other. The growing concerns of the modern world make this relationship even more important. In addition to its oil wealth, Algeria possesses the

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<sup>4</sup> Alfred Hermida. "Verdicts that please no one." *Middle East International*. (24 July 1992) p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Layachi: 171.

world's fourth largest natural gas reserves.<sup>6</sup> The need is so great, that two trans-Mediterranean pipelines were built to directly ship the gas from Algeria to the consumer nations. In addition to its traditional patron, France, Algeria supplies energy to Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Germany. Significantly, it provides somewhere between fifteen and twenty percent of Italy's and Spain's energy needs. By the turn of the century, Algerian gas will meet nearly thirty percent of Southern Europe's energy needs.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to a possible loss of inexpensive natural gas, European states feel that state collapse in Algeria would produce a flood of unwanted and unabsorbable refugees. This mass of humanity would strain European resources, drain its coffers, and provide a foothold for radical Islam within the secular boundaries of Europe. Southern European states, led by France, have expended a considerable amount of time and money propping up the Algerian military regime. The costs generated by the societal disintegration, or the emergence of an Islamic state on Europe's periphery were too high not to be involved.

## **2. The American Perspective**

Throughout the conflict, the United States has been content to follow Europe's lead with regard to Algeria. While a number of private firms have commercial interests, the United States has no strong economic concerns or treaty obligations to enforce. Thus, it has been willing to support European policy. When asked, it has agreed to restructure

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<sup>6</sup> United States Department of Energy. "Algeria: General Background." [<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Algeria.html>].

<sup>7</sup> Warren True. "Trans-Med expansion nears start-up; Maghreb line nears construction." *Oil and Gas Journal*. (Jan 17, 1994) p. 51.



its share of Algeria's foreign debt, or to support additional loans out of loyalty to its European allies. While it has called on Algeria's military to negotiate a settlement with the FIS, it has refrained from applying any real pressure.

### **3. Validity of International Policies**

With regard to the Algerian conflict, there is a great deal of question as to whether the international response is adequate and appropriate. The international community has consistently professed neutrality, and called for a political resolution to the conflict. However, key states have been quite willing to follow the French lead in granting military and economic support to the junta. In light of such hypocrisy, there is little wonder as to why Islamic militants began to attack European targets.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

The following six chapters will examine the current Algerian political situation. They will show how the current stalemate between the military, its Islamic opponents, and civil society has produced a stalemate that prevents successful equilibration, and discuss the effects on European security. The thesis will commence with a historical overview of the nature of the relationship between state and society in Algeria. Building upon William Quandt's theory of revolutionary leadership, Chapter II will explore the flaws in the FLN's social contract that led to the party's political demise in 1991. The Chapter will demonstrate how manipulation of the delicate balance of power amongst the FLN's political, bureaucratic, and military wings led to the current crisis. Furthermore, this chapter explains why society embraced the FIS above equally qualified secular parties

when the political system was liberalized. With this accomplished, it will discuss the motivations for military intervention and the subsequent civil war.

Chapter III will discuss the leadership, motivations, and organizational structure of the Islamic opposition in Algeria. I will argue that the true nature of the FIS has been misinterpreted in light of the military conflict. I intend to show that the FIS was in fact, the moderate wing of the Islamic movement, and could play an important role in settling the Algerian crisis in a manner favorable to Western interests. Significantly, the chapter will show how government suppression of a loyal political movement led to the radicalization of its followers. In Algeria, the prohibition of the FIS produced the armed groups that threaten stability today. Despite the claims of the Algerian government, these groups have little if any direct linkage to the politically-based FIS. The chapter will further demonstrate the price to be paid as continued suppression of the FIS strengthens the radical opposition.

With this accomplished, Chapter IV will discuss European fears and motivations with to regard to Islam and Algerian politics. It will explain why key European trading partners have been unwavering in their support of the military regime and explore the nature of the symbiotic relationship between Algeria and Southern Europe. Algeria's military government would have been unable to resist the Islamic militants without the international legitimacy and financial assistance conferred upon it by European states. At the same time, Europe is extremely reliant upon Algeria for its energy needs, and would



oppose any regime change that threatened its access. The chapter will also discuss the domestic political concerns raised in Southern Europe as a result of the ongoing crisis.

Chapter V looks at civil society's failed attempt at political resolution of the conflict. Although the government rejected the proposal outright, the national conference of 1995 offered the best hope for political equilibration in Algeria. Under the auspices of San 'Egidio, a Catholic lay organization, Algeria's major secular political parties set aside their differences and joined with the FIS in creating a plan for democratization and respect for individual rights. I will use the political transformation theories of Juan Linz, Guillermo O'Donnell and others to explain why this framework still offers the best chance for resolving Algeria's problems.

Chapter VI explores the Algerian military's attempt to equilibrate the political system in a way that benefits its own institutional needs. It will show how the division of power amongst the military leadership resulted in vacillating policies during the civil conflict, and discusses what that means for Algeria's future. I will argue that the current military-sponsored plan for national reconciliation is likely to fail. The 1995 presidential elections brought a considerable amount of legitimacy to the regime. However, post-election behavior indicates that the government believes it can rebuild Algeria's political system by co-opting secular opposition parties while suppressing the FIS. There is scant evidence to suggest that this course of action would be successful. If the FIS is not allowed to participate in Algerian politics, the Islamic movement is likely to fall under the domination of the armed groups that had laid waste to Algeria over the past four years.

In Chapter VII, the motivations of the key political actors will be summarized, and the thesis will switch toward an exploration of European security costs should Algeria's government fail. I will argue that Algeria's ability to co-opt civil society is based upon the financial resources and legitimacy granted by the international community. As such, further radicalization of the Islamic movement is likely to lead to more violent activities in Europe, and increased targeting of European interests in Algeria. The chapter will argue that this can be prevented if the international community directs its support toward civil society instead of toward the government. Southern Europe is willing to prop up the military regime because these states believe the military's demise will produce cataclysmic short term costs. It behooves objective observers such as the United States to demonstrate how the San 'Egidio pact will help to defray the results. If the flawed political equilibration goes forward, the continued decay of Algeria will have a tremendous effect on European security. Europe opposes an Islamic Algeria because of the perceived economic and social costs it would bring. The irony is that supporting Algeria's government instead of civil society is more likely to bring these fears to fruition.

## II. THE ROOTS OF THE SECOND REVOLUTION

### A. THE ARMY TAKES POWER

On 11 January 1992, Algeria's top military leadership forced President Chadli Benjedid to resign and seized power in a bloodless coup. Algeria's first experiment with democracy had not been to their liking. The elections intended to restore the legitimacy of the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) had instead produced an overwhelming upset by the religious-based Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). Since any true regime change would have drastically altered the military's relationship to the government, democratization was a threat to be opposed. Its implementation would have threatened the military's institutional interests.

The army suspended the 1989 constitution in favor of martial law and a military-dominated 'High State Council' (HCE). One of this body's first decrees was the reinstatement of the dreaded *mukhabarat*, or state security apparatus which had been dismantled during the democratic transition. The result was the rapid suppression of the normative channels of societal discontent that had emerged during the latter part of Benjedid's reign. The media was tightly controlled, and only official government stories could be printed. If independent newspapers sought to undertake their own investigations, their employees were subject to government harassment, and the paper could be shut down. Dissenting political parties were also suppressed. The FIS was banned outright, and other political parties were subject to military harassment when they failed to comply with the HCE's demands.

In light of this suppression, the emergence of societal-based violence was predictable. Within six months of his return from a self-imposed thirty year exile, the regime's interim president, Mohammed Boudiaf, became the first political casualty of the second Algerian revolution. State officials, foreigners, and the populace at large, have become all too frequent targets in what threatened to be a second Algerian revolution. In the interim five years at least 50,000 people have died.

Throughout this period, the military rarely attempted to settle the dispute by anything other than military means. Secular political parties were accepted only when they supported military policy, and the Islamic political opposition was treated as if they were criminals. In November 1995, the military stood for Presidential elections in order to shore up flagging international support. Retired General Liame Zeroual, who had led the military government for the past three years, won with slightly more than 60 percent of the vote. International observers declared the election to be free and fair, and voter turnout was placed above 70 percent. However, while the announced margin of victory was much more realistic than most states in the Arab world, any claim to an end to the conflict would be suspect. Despite the presence of international observers, the election was far from free. The four candidates participating in the election were selected by the military; the FIS was officially banned, and a number of mainstream political parties boycotted the entire procedure. As a result, the vote might have been a signal that society was tired of the conflict instead of an indication of support for government policy.



The success or failure of the military's efforts to impose stability has implications that go far beyond its borders. The military government survived largely on the basis on the economic and political support it was provided by European nations. However, while supporting the military government may have assisted European short term interests, it almost certainly has hurt their long term interests. The longer the military suppresses the Islamists, the more tenuous the hold the Islamist political leadership has on the militants. If the Algerian political system is not stabilized, the result will be more acts of terrorism against European targets, and an Islamic government that is truly hostile to Europe.

## **B. THE NATURE OF STATE AND SOCIETY IN ALGERIA**

What can account for the military's behavior? In the three year period (1989-1992) between the implementation of the new constitution and the first round of elections, Algeria's transition appeared to be a model worthy of emulation. The monolithic state had placed itself on a fast track toward democracy. It had allowed other parties to form in opposition to the FLN and had liberalized restrictions on the media and individual rights to the point where people were allowed to freely express their opinions. Algeria was on the verge of democratization, and President Chadli Benjedid appeared to be committed to change.

However, Benjedid's commitment did not equate to party commitment; there were serious divisions in the FLN with regard to democracy, and the nature of the party's development prevented Benjedid from acquiring the ability to control internal dissenters. To understand the impetus for democratization, and the military's ability to resist, it is

necessary to understand the relationship between state and society in Algeria since independence.

## **1. Formation of Party and Government**

### ***a. The 1962 Revolution***

After eight years of bloody war, Algeria won its independence from France in 1962. Building upon the work of previous movements, the National Liberation Front (FLN), had raised the stakes to the point where France, under the leadership of Charles De Gaulle, was willing to cut its losses and withdraw. However, the new state was not without problems. The joy of independence was tempered by the monumental task of rebuilding all that had been destroyed.

Eight years of open combat had left Algeria economically and socially devastated. Out of a prewar population of 15 million, more than 1 million Algerians were dead, while another 1.8 million were refugees.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Algerian independence meant the departure of the *colons*, which had vehemently resisted independence. In light of their past behavior, these settlers felt the government would not protect their interests or property. Thus, within the first year of independence, almost 1 million European nationals left for France. Any political benefit received from the departure of the landlords was far outweighed by the resultant social and economic costs. The mass migration meant the loss of most of Algeria's skilled labor and capital. As John Ruedy writes "Departing colons methodically and vindictively destroyed libraries, hospitals, government buildings,

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<sup>8</sup> John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) p.190.

factories, machinery, and whatever else was within their reach that they could not take with them.”<sup>9</sup> Algeria was independent, but economically destitute.

With such difficulties ahead, the FLN decided that democracy was a luxury that Algeria could ill afford. This system was divisive and wasteful while Algeria had serious problems that needed to be addressed. To the FLN’s leadership, competition wasted time and resources, both of which were in short supply. Instead, Algeria would be a socialist nation under the aegis of the FLN.

*b. Elite Formation Within the FLN*

After eight years of war however, “the FLN had become a segmented structure consisting of numerous competing and often hostile subgroups. Some semblance of a common front remained, but only at the price of tacitly recognizing that inter-elite conflicts could not be resolved until independence was achieved.”<sup>10</sup> The primary goals for the majority of the combatant commands were modernization and national independence. Islam was an organizing tool of the revolution, but not its focal point. The main goal was simply an end to French rule. As leading Algerian analyst John Entelis notes, in this respect, the Algerian conflict was more of a ‘war’ than a ‘social revolution.’: “The battle was fought by men united in hardly anything except the common objective of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 186.

<sup>10</sup> William Quandt, *Revolution and Political Leadership: Algeria, 1954-1968*. (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1969) p.126.



their hatred - the European settlers. The war of hideous and singularly intimate brutality served to avenge the trauma of colonialization.”<sup>11</sup>

Following the war, three major groups emerged to compete for party dominance: the *Willaya* commands, which had fought the urban guerrilla war; the army of the frontier, which had staged actions from Morocco and Tunisia; and the provisional government, which had represented the movement abroad. As William Quandt notes, matters were further complicated by “. . . a backlog of distrust and conflict . . . independence merely brought the opportunity to settle accounts that had lain dormant because of the overriding goal of maintaining a facade of unity.”<sup>12</sup> These three groups and their institutional distrust would be the driving force in Algerian politics for the next three decades.

Between the June 1962 Congress and the installation of the first government in September, the three main groups positioned themselves to determine which would emerge on top. It is interesting to note that at independence, there was already a gap between the state’s elites and the society they represented. The general populace was more concerned with finding separated family members and rebuilding their lives than with settling political disputes. The fate of the nation rested with the state’s elites.

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<sup>11</sup> John Entelis, *Algeria: The Revolution Institutionalized*. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986) p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> Quandt, p.148.

At times, the dialogue amongst the three groups became extremely fractious. However, disputes rarely resulted in bloodshed. There seemed to be a tacit agreement after eight years of war that open hostilities amongst Algerians would lead to the disintegration of the state before it came into existence. As Quandt writes:

The fact that physical liquidation was rarely used among the top elites testifies to the widely shared belief that violence of this type would quickly destroy any semblance of elite integration. Henceforth when capital punishments were carried out against prominent political or military leaders . . . considerable effort was expended to cloak the proceedings with an aura of legality. Assassination and execution did not become widely used methods of resolving elite conflicts.<sup>13</sup>

These minimal rules of political conflict allowed the various elites to agree to a balanced power sharing. Once the army of the frontier was assured a special place as the 'guardian of the revolution,' it agreed to support a government formed by the political wing of FLN. This gave politicians the leverage to exploit the disagreements amongst the various *Willaya* commanders. With the support of the army, the FLN could co-opt key *Willaya* commanders instead of dealing with the organization as a whole. However, this arrangement meant that the resultant political institutions were not formed by any type of formal political process; the government of President Ben Bella would be dependent upon the support of a coalition composed of factions that often violently disagreed with sharing power with each other. The only route to survival and development would be to play off the emerging elites amongst the Military, the Urban Revolutionaries (*Willayas*) and the Politicians (Intellectuals).

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.132.

Ben Bella survived for only three years before he was deposed in a bloodless coup by his Minister of Defense, Colonel Houari Boumedienne. In his attempt to gain autonomy for the political wing of the party, Ben Bella had failed to notice the changes in the factions that composed the military and the revolutionaries, as well as the creation of a new set of elites from the state bureaucracy. The triangle of party-state-army remained intact, but the absorption of the *Willaya* combatants into the increasing professional army meant that the scales between the military and the politicians were unevenly balanced. Furthermore, the transformation of the intellectual wing of the military into the state's bureaucratic apparatus allowed the military to align with this faction against the government. In effect, Ben Bella had concentrated on balancing groups competing with each other and failed to account for collusion between factions seeking to overthrow the politicians. From 1965 onward Algerian politics would be under the strong influence of the military.

## **2. Motives for State-Societal Discontent 1965-1989**

With the 'iron triangle' secure in its position, Boumedienne's government began to enact the wide-sweeping social and economic changes that it felt would bring Algeria into the modern world. The export earnings from the nation's large deposits of gas and oil would pay for the development of heavy industries, while collective farming of the vast tracts of land left fallow by the departed *colons* would provide sufficient crops for the nation to feed itself. During this development the government would provide for the material needs of the population in return for their acquiescence. In effect, "A ruling

bargain was struck by the leadership with the people at independence under which the populace gave up its rights to independent political activity in return for the state's provision of social welfare.”<sup>14</sup>

If this had been limited to a brief period of intense development, the ramifications would not have been quite as severe. However, the maintenance of these policies for more than 20 years led to the formation of a pseudo-rentier state. With no opportunity to participate, and no legal forum for political dissent, the population's support for the government would be dependent upon its ability to redistribute goods and services. When the state proved unable to deliver on these promises, the absence of the democratic structures made its links to the populace very tenuous.

### **C. THE END OF THE SINGLE PARTY STATE**

This was Boumedienne's political legacy when he died in 1979. Under his reign, the state had expanded its control on Algeria's economy and the population's personal freedoms at the price of democratic participation. In effect, he would build coalitions amongst state elites and buy off the general populace. As a result of his methods, Boumedienne's death produced a major political crisis. The personification of rule that marked his regime threatened the balance of power amongst state elites, and as well as the factional control of the distribution networks and parastatals that garnered societal support.

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<sup>14</sup> John Entelis, "State and Society in Transition." *State and Society in Algeria*, John Entelis and Philip Naylor, ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) p. 1.



After a brief power struggle the FLN accepted the military's nominee Col. Chadli Benjedid, the long time commander of the Western military district. However, Benjedid's nomination did not result from the military's admiration of his leadership or organizational abilities. As Robert Mortimer notes, "Benjedid was expected to be a relatively weak chief executive unlikely to dominate the power apparatus to the extent Boumedienne had."<sup>15</sup> Thus state and military elites would not have to worry about another Boumedienne limiting their actions. They could concentrate on maximizing personal gains to the detriment of society. During the first decade of Benjedid's rule, the gap between state and society increased.

When the worldwide recession of the early 1980's came, Algeria was hit hard. Algeria had backed its industrial development on the exploitation of its gas and oil resources; nearly 95% of its export earnings came from this sector. A \$1 change in the price per barrel of oil meant a loss of a \$500 million in Algerian export revenue per year and during this recession, the price would fall by more than \$4 per barrel. Oil revenues fell from \$12.5 billion in 1985 to less than \$8 billion in 1986.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the emphasis the government placed upon gas and oil development led it to reinvest profits into ventures that promised additional explorations. As a result, Algeria sorely neglected vital areas of its economy. In its effort to build heavy industry, the FLN neglected

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Mortimer. "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algerian War." *Middle East Journal*. (Winter 1996) p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> James Phillips. "The Threat of Revolutionary Islam in Algeria." *The Heritage Foundation Background Papers no. 1060*. (November 9, 1995) p. 3.

agriculture. Ben Bella's vaunted plan to collectivize *colon* lands never came to fruition. Food crops were neglected so badly that by 1975 Algeria had transformed itself from a net exporter to an importer of foodstuffs. In addition, flawed negotiations had cost the state its access to the crucial American natural gas market, at a time when it needed a high cash flow to pay off development loans taken during the 1970's. Instead the government was forced to sell to the Europeans at a greatly reduced rate. With such a catastrophic loss in revenue, some type of structural readjustment was necessary. The state could no longer afford to offer the high subsidies it provided for basic consumer commodities. The recession meant an end to revenue sharing.

The end of subsidization meant the demise of the unwritten contract between the government and the people. Since the government was unable to provide for the people's basic needs, a strong sense of discontent began to develop, especially since per capita income had already fallen more than 18 percent between 1985 and 1991.<sup>17</sup> The end to subsidies also served to highlight the vast differences between the elites and the people that had developed over more than 20 years of FLN rule. As John Entelis writes:

Algeria's economic polarization was such that only 5 percent of the population was earning 45 percent of the national income, whereas another 50 percent was earning less than 22 percent of national income. Members of the party elite enjoyed privileged access to foreign capital and goods, were ensured positions at the head of state owned enterprises, and benefited from corrupt management of state-owned goods and services. The masses suffered from the increasing reforms and economic austerity in the mid to late 1980s. . . The FLN had lost legitimacy in the eyes of the masses.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> John Entelis. "Government in Algeria." *Area Handbook - Algeria*, Grace Morton, ed. (Washington: U.S. GPO, 1995) p. 196.

The FLN's call for loyalty on the basis of its role in the revolution fell upon deaf ears. By 1988, more than 60 percent of the population had been born after Algeria's independence. Civil society had already begun to resist the intrusive state, but this crisis pushed their loyalty to the limit. By now the populace was unimpressed by the FLN's constant reminders of its role in the Algerian revolution. When the non-elite youth of the nation viewed the party, they saw the authoritative military and the bloated bureaucratic apparatus instead of the valiant revolutionaries and they were unimpressed by calls for shared sacrifice.

### **1. The 1988 Riots**

Events reached a peak in October 1988. Upset at another round of price increases, and having no institutional channels of protest available, the populace of Algiers rioted for four straight days (October 26-30, 1988). Their targets were largely limited to government offices, foreign markets limited to elite patrons, and other symbols that represented FLN privilege. As Robert Mortimer notes, there is no clear evidence that any coherent social group organized the outburst.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, while some religious leaders did attempt to exploit the unrest for personal gain, the majority tried to calm the populace's fear. To restore order, Benjedid declared a state of siege and call upon the army to resolve the situation; an action that produced two unforeseen consequences.

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Mortimer. "Algeria after the Explosion." *Current History*. (April, 1990) p. 164.



## 2. The Military Response

In its response, the military treated the riots as a military problem instead of a case of civil unrest. “Throughout the spree of violence, the security forces fired into the crowds, which remained composed mainly of teenagers, made arbitrary arrests, and tortured prisoners.”<sup>20</sup> Unofficial tallies place the death toll at 159 with hundreds more wounded and more than 3,000 arrested.<sup>21</sup> The cost to the state was equally severe. Government facilities suffered an estimated \$250 million in damage.<sup>22</sup> The most advanced and economically important sections of Algiers lay in ruins, while the unwritten contract between the state and the people had been irrevocably canceled by the army’s harsh response.

The actions also served to show the gaps that had developed between the political apparatus and the armed forces. The military as an institution was extremely upset at having to solve what it regarded as a crisis created by the ineptness of the constitution. They valued their roles as defenders of the revolution, and should the politicians fail to fulfill their part in the bureaucratic-political-army compact, the military would see to their replacement. Thus, when Benjedid announced his intent to seek liberalization in early November, it was not due to a desire to transform the state. The politicians found

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 164.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Phillips, p. 3.

themselves isolated from society and their own military allies. To ensure political supremacy, a new social compact had to be created.

#### **D. INTRA-ELITE MANEUVERING**

The October 1988 riots showed just how tenuous the link was between state and society. The factional conflict within the FLN led it to ignore or suppress the general populace until it was too late. However, crisis is a mix of danger and opportunity. While societal discontent threatened stability, it also offered a chance for the political wing to amass power at the expense of the party's other factions. Although he publicly accepted responsibility for the state's brutal reaction, Benjedid attempted to use the riots as a fulcrum to crush the bureaucrats and control the military.

With his call for responsible government, Benjedid began by dismissing the underlings whom he could blame for the riots. However, it was soon apparent that these actions were less of an attempt to place responsibility than they were an attempt to purge the political opposition. The vast majority of these dismissals, including Prime Minister Mohammed Cerif Messadia, came from the party's bureaucratic wing which was most opposed to political reform.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, although the military was equally responsible for the state's harsh reactions, it was almost completely untouched by the purge. Although the army's chief of internal security was fired, very few military leaders were disciplined. In city after city, the government held the bureaucratic apparatus responsible, while sparing the military commanders who had actually ordered the atrocities. Benjedid could

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 185.

not afford to offend the military as an institution. He needed them to augment his voting bloc to negate the socially weakened but still politically viable bureaucratic faction. Thus temporarily granting the military a reprieve was a necessary cost in centralizing the state's authority.

### **1. Changes in State-Societal Relations**

At the same time Benjedid realized that the party would have to rebuild the linkage between itself and the society it purportedly represented. This would be a two pronged effort. The first step was an executive order pardoning and releasing all people arrested in the course of the riot. The second was the implementation of a series of political and economic reforms. In effect, "The experience of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union was about to be duplicated in North Africa's largest and most powerful state."<sup>24</sup> Perestroika would be achieved by the breakup and privatization of the vast majority of the large, inefficient state owned corporations, and the imposition of strict limitations on the party's patronage network. Glasnost would come about with the end of the *Mukhabarat*, and the easement of state control of the media.

These reforms also included a small but significant step in the state's political transformation when Benjedid proposed legislation that increased the president's power and made the Prime Minister accountable to the national assembly instead of the FLN. Since party membership had been required for all individuals seeking political office since

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<sup>24</sup> John Entelis. "Preface." *State and Society in Algeria*, John Entelis and Philip Naylor, ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992) p. xi.

1980, the latter might not have seemed a major change. The assembly would still be composed solely of FLN members and the Prime Minister would still be accountable to the same constituency. As Mortimer writes however, “The proposal shrewdly implied a shift from party to parliamentary rule that was responsive to the widespread discontent with the FLN.”<sup>25</sup> The FLN may have been the only party, but changing the rules would enhance Benjedid’s position after the elections; the parliament would no longer be subject to the traditional balance of power amongst the three wings of the party, and Benjedid would therefore be able to undertake additional reforms later.

However, the restructuring of the party’s power-sharing structure meant the end to the carefully negotiated balance of power amongst its elites; a loss that they were not willing to accept. Legislation could be imposed, but the party bureaucracy would resist should changes fail to meet its expectations. Furthermore, the army was co-opted rather than controlled; when their institutional interests were threatened, the military would be an unreliable ally. The lack of enthusiastic support from the party factions meant the transformation lacked a stable political foundation.

## **2. Changes to Intra-Elite Relations**

As the only candidate for the presidency, Benjedid easily won the 1989 presidential election. Upon its conclusion, he continued his efforts to alter Algeria’s political landscape. Instead of the decrepit arrangement amongst the factions of the FLN, he wanted a state led by the technocratic elites whatever their background. This required a

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<sup>25</sup> Mortimer, “Algeria after the Explosion.” p. 164.



balanced market economy and a more inclusive political system. The iron triangle of party-bureaucracy-military which had governed Algeria for almost 30 years would have to be scrapped. The new arrangement would be the party's technocrats, the military and the state's emerging commercial interests. The party's bureaucratic wing would be stripped of its patronage powers and left to wither away.

The desired changes were so significant that they required a complete rewrite of the 1976 constitution; an action that could only be undertaken while the bureaucracy remained discredited by their authoritative response to the riots. It was time for the military to repay Benjedid for sparing them the worst effects of the purge. To guarantee their support prior to the elections, he appointed Kasdi Merbah to replace Mohammed Cerif Messadia as Prime Minister . Merbah had served as the head of military security under Boumedienne and previously held a number of political appointments under Benjedid. He had the full respect of the military. As long as Benjedid supported him, the politicians could count on the army's votes.

*a. Reemergence of Military Political Awareness*

Co-opting the military as a political partner was a necessary but not desirable task for the politicians. Having emerged from its ranks following the death of Boumedienne, Benjedid was only too aware of the army's strength - politically, economically, and militarily. As a functioning wing of the FLN it had been instrumental in shaping the course of the country. Its generals held top political offices and as



demonstrated by the coup against Ben Bella in 1965, the army would seek to protect itself and the state from what it perceived to be self-serving politicians.

However, the politicians had little choice. Although the populace had blessed Benjedid, the country's legislation still flowed through the FLN. Without solid military support, Benjedid would be unable to accomplish anything. Quandt's analysis of the FLN in 1965 still applied to the party structure in 1989. Much as Ben Bella became the first president because of disorganized opposition, Benjedid was able to enact his political reforms because of the high levels of factionalism. By co-opting key political allies and securing military votes, Benjedid could present a unified front to those that opposed his agenda. His was merely the strongest coalition. There was significant opposition to the proposals for political transformation, but factionalism and infighting prevented the party from organizing around an alternate leader. As Mortimer writes:

Many of the same forces that had resisted the rewriting of the national charter now stood against the drift of Benjedid's proposals for institutional reform . . . Before the party convention, Prime Minister Merbah had run into a similar road-block when he presented his government program to the FLN-controlled National Assembly; a block of deputies withheld approval more than a week . . . Although it was clear that there was opposition in the local party cells, there was no clear alternate leadership, especially insofar as Benjedid had been careful to line up the support of the large bloc of delegates from the military . . . the party officially gave its blessing.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 180.

With such a significant alteration of the political balance amongst elites, there would be consequences. Although the army had always played an important role in Algerian politics, the end of the iron triangle left it in a position where it would no longer be controlled by the politicians or the bureaucracy. By isolating the bureaucracy in his attempt to enact change, Benjedid ensured that the army would be Algeria's power broker. Whichever faction it chose to support would succeed.

Furthermore, while the military had always returned to barracks after defending the party and state from political threats, the new arrangement changed their institutional interests. They were now responsible to the state, not the party. If the politicians could not maintain stability, then the army would see to it that order reigned. Military leaders were tired of losing their prestige through internal police activities resulting from political incapacity.

#### ***b. Enactment of the New Constitution***

Benjedid's new constitution was approved via national referendum in February 1989. Significant changes included the end of the state's commitment to socialism, the allowance of political organizations independent of the FLN, and the strengthening of executive power. Furthermore, with the consolidation of the reforms the politicians felt they no longer needed to placate the military. The new constitution gave the military no special preferences. It even stripped the army of its title of 'defender of the revolution' which had been conferred upon the institution in 1962 in acknowledgment of its sacrifices against the French. Additionally, for the first time the military was to be

placed under the direct control of the nation's civilian leadership. "The 1989 constitution . . . gave Benjedid some freedom from ideological constraints. At the same time, it opened Algerian politics in dramatic fashion."<sup>27</sup> For the first time, the FLN would stand for election against other political organizations.

### **3. The Rise of the Islamic Salvation Front**

Benjedid's reforms gave Algeria the appearance of a nation on track for democracy, but it is important to remember that democracy was not the goal, it was merely a byproduct of his effort to enhance his position vis-à-vis the iron triangle. Winning electoral victories in a system that provided open political competition could once again give the FLN a legitimate right to rule. Since the politicians were now in firm control of the party, Benjedid's power would therefore be consolidated. The reality of the situation was that the party expected very little challenge to its rule; society was in a state of extreme discontent, but social interests were too diverse and factionalized for any one group to pose a challenge. The state reinforced these divisions by allowing more than 30 different parties to register for the initial stab at democracy: regional and municipal elections scheduled for 1990. With this many groups the political wing of the FLN thought the protest vote would split in such a way that the new parties would cancel each other's votes. No matter how flawed the FLN's internal workings, its organizational capacities were such that it would be guaranteed victory.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 180.

What they failed to consider however, was the challenge posed by the lumpen civil society that existed external of the state. While civil society was extremely diverse, one key factor cut across demographic lines to unite a significant percentage of the general populace - religion. Thus, when the FIS petitioned for the right to organize as a political party, it encountered little opposition. As Benjedid noted at the time:

The activities of the Islamist party are submitted to precise rules. If they respect them, we cannot forbid them. We are Moslems and it is important for us to encourage Islam in its just conception, not the pseudo Islam of myths and extremism. If certain people do not look on this legalization kindly, that is their affair. For our part, it is not conceivable to apply democracy to communists and to deprive that which preaches spiritual belonging . . . Democracy cannot be selective.<sup>28</sup>

Benjedid's politicians underestimated the power of religion because they thought that in a state where 99% of the population was Sunni Moslem, an organizational identity based upon religion would be redundant. Most parties, including the FLN, had Islamic devotion amongst their tenets. Additionally, the FIS was one of five parties organized directly around Islam. Thus, the government felt religion would offer no special advantage to one group over another. In fact, the reemergence of the religious devotion that the FIS represented could be used to help pacify the populace. Religion had helped to end the factional disputes the followed independence and Benjedid might have thought it could assist him during this transition period.

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<sup>28</sup> Francois Burgat and William Dowell, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993) p. 74.



In this, Benjedid's reformers committed their gravest error. Religion was a unifying factor in Algeria, but it benefited society, not the state. Indeed, during the FLN's thirty year reign, state control of the media and the omnipresent secret police ensured that the mosques were the only channel of dissent. A clear example was the state's attempt to ensure the loyalty of the religious establishment to the state. In the early 1970's, the FLN declared that only Imams who had received the approval of the Ministry of Religious Affairs were to lead prayers. Society simply ignored the edict. People flocked to the equivalent of storefront churches where they could pray what they wanted instead of being limited to government approved clerics and texts. As the nation underwent massive urbanization during the 1970's and 1980's, the state found itself unable to furnish sufficient state-approved Imams. As a result, "The 'Imam shortage' opened the way for the independent Islamist movement which quickly moved in to fill the public arena. These unofficial Imams preached wherever they could find space and occupied official mosques in defiance of government legislation."<sup>29</sup> As a result, Islam was a unifying factor amongst the opposition long before the 1988 riots. Much as Catholicism served help to unite Solidarity in Poland, Islam unified the opposition in Algeria.

With its diverse base of support, the FIS quickly emerged as the FLN's main opposition. It officially registered as a political party in September 1989, and quickly captured the support of those upset with the FLN's autocratic rule. Its strength was first demonstrated in the nation's first pluralistic election, held in March 1990. The election

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<sup>29</sup> John Entelis. "Government in Algeria." *Area Handbook - Algeria*, Grace Morton, ed. p. 208.



covered regional and city governments. Competing against more than 12 other parties, the FIS won control of a majority of the *Willaya* governorships, and the city councils in the major cities of Algiers and Oran, as well as a number of smaller towns. Although the FLN still controlled the national government, it was apparent that Benjedid's plan had failed.

#### **4. Demise of the FLN**

The FIS's victory in the 1990 elections spelled the beginning of the end for the FLN. The party had bought off on Benjedid's political reform because it would enhance FLN's ability to rule. It had given little thought to the possibility that political competition would put it in danger of actually losing power. If the politicians could not find a way to maintain the party's hegemony, the differences in opinion over whether to democratize, and the methods employed by Benjedid's reformers would split the party.

Thus with little more than eighteen months before the democratic experiment was applied at the national level, the FLN began to alter the political landscape to suit its needs. Claiming that certain areas had previously been underrepresented, the politicians proposed to increase the number of seats in the national assembly from 295 to 542.<sup>30</sup> The vast majority of increases would be located in the rural areas where the FLN felt it was stronger than the FIS. A second change was the implementation of the French-based two round voting system. If no candidate received an absolute majority in the first round, then

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Mortimer. "Algeria: The Clash between Islam, Democracy, and the Military." *Current History*. (January 1993) p. 39.

the top two candidates would compete against each other in a follow-on vote. The FLN presumed that in the national elections, when faced with a choice between the Islamists and themselves, such changes would force the populace to vote for the FLN instead of their preferred party. Thus, the FLN would be able to maintain its hold on power while gaining the legitimacy of the electoral process. These beliefs were supported by a government study in May 1991 that predicted that the FLN would have a majority in the assembly even if it received fewer popular votes than the FIS. The survey showed that with a predicted national vote of only 24 percent, the FLN would hold 244 seats while the FIS with a projected 33 percent would receive only 206 seats.<sup>31</sup>

However, the study was premature, and its methodology was flawed. It did not anticipate a strong societal reaction to these ‘reforms’ or a weakening of the coalitions that bound the FLN. Yet within the year both occurred. The general populace no longer blindly accepted the FLN’s decrees, and resulting backlash damaged the party as its various factions sought to shift blame onto each other in their attempts to protect institutional interests.

*a. Societal Withdrawal From the FLN*

When the FLN instituted these ‘reforms’ in 1990, it encountered a much more independent and skeptical society. Furthermore, the state’s previous political and social liberalization gave the populace channels to protest what they viewed as a clearly unjust use of the political system to benefit the FLN. Newspapers and the electronic

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

media openly criticized the government's blatant abuse of power, and gave wide coverage to opposition leaders protesting the changes. Additionally, while the measure was designed to hinder the Islamists, the restrictions they placed upon secular parties made for a broad coalition aligned against the state. Movements as diverse as the Socialist Forces Front (FFS), and the Movement for a Democratic Algeria (MDA) joined the FIS in condemning the changes, and calling for a return to the electoral process agreed to in the 1990 constitution.

When political protests failed to yield tangible results, the leadership of the FIS decided that a demonstration of Algeria's new balance of power was in order. While the FLN still held the national posts, the FIS had built much stronger societal ties through the unexciting but extremely important administrative positions won in the 1990 elections. Six months before the elections, the FIS encouraged the populace to once again return to the streets in protest by calling for a general strike to protest the FLN's actions in May 1991.

While it had been slow to respond to the 1988 riots, the national government did not hesitate to quickly intervene this time. Within hours of the first demonstration in Algiers, Benjedid declared martial law and called upon the army to break up the assemblies. The army responded with violence similar to that employed in 1988, killing dozens and arresting thousands. Amongst the latter's numbers were the FIS' top political leaders including Chairman Abassi Madani and Vice Chairman Ali Benhadj. Since the state was under martial law, the government was able to bypass the judicial

system, and quickly tried the men before a military tribunal. Despite their claim that they had a valid permit from the FIS controlled city council, the military declared the Algiers demonstration to be illegal and sentenced Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj, the party's top leaders, to 12 years in prison for inciting a riot.

*b. Loss of Military Support*

On the political front, while Benjedid had publicly accepted responsibility for the 1988 riots, this time he sought to place the blame squarely upon the backs of the party apparatus and the military. With regard to his security, this was not a wise move, because it enhanced the growing split between Benjedid's political wing and its military allies. The military leadership was already upset with Benjedid by the dismissal of their patron Kasdah Merbah, after a mere six months as Prime Minister. They demanded the resignation of Merbah's successor, Mouland Hamrouche, one of Benjedid's key allies from the party's political wing. For his replacement, the military 'recommended' Sid Ghozali, a former military officer who had held a number of significant posts under Boumedienne during the 1970's.

Furthermore, while the military had accepted some institutional culpability for the 1988 riots, it held the politicians responsible for these demonstrations. By the time of the May 1991 protests, the FLN's central committee no longer included any military officers.<sup>32</sup> In fact, following Merbah's replacement as Prime Minister, the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 42.



military's top leadership began to resign from the party. The preservation of the army as an institution was more important than the preservation of the party. Thus, when the army was called out for the second time in three years to suppress civil unrest on the behalf of the state, there was a great deal of resentment at the loss of institutional integrity that it suffered due to the failures of corrupt politicians. The riots were the final straw for the military; Benjedid's politicians would have to succeed or fail by themselves. His coalition dissolved, and the military could no longer be considered a reliable ally.

#### **E. THE DISSOLUTION OF THE STATE**

In light of societal unrest, the government postponed the elections, originally scheduled for June 1991, until December. With the nation under a state of siege, campaigning was muted. Indeed, political parties were not allowed to publish their pamphlets for the first three months of the campaign. Furthermore, the government felt that the arrest and conviction of Madani and Benhadj would lead to the disintegration of the FIS. The government almost received its wish. Racked by internal divisions, the FIS only decided to participate in the election twelve days before the December 26 vote.<sup>33</sup> In light of the FIS' perceived weakness, the government saw no reason to force the government to delay elections again.

The results surprised both sides. In the first round the FIS won 188 seats outright, while the FLN won a mere 16 seats, and in fact placed an ignominious third behind the

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<sup>33</sup> Yahia Zoubir. "The Painful Transition from Authoritarianism in Algeria." *Arab Studies Quarterly*. (Summer 1993) p. 101.



FFS which garnered 25 seats. If the FIS won 28 seats in the second round of elections scheduled for early January, they would be able to rule outright. Since the FIS had a candidate in nearly every run-off, its parliamentary majority appeared to be a foregone conclusion.

### **1. The Military as Power-Broker**

Benjedid's restructuring of the FLN's power structure now worked against his interests. He had destroyed the bureaucratic wing of the party, while the military had resigned from the party, and was proving to be an unwilling and untrustworthy ally. Since the FLN's technocratic faction had performed so miserably in the national elections, Benjedid would have to accommodate the Islamists to remain in power. As Yahia Zoubir writes, it was this action that led to the military's seizure of power. "Benjedid's behind-the-scenes dealings with the FIS prompted the military to cancel the electoral process just five days before the second ballot. The military could no longer endure the maneuvering of Benjedid, the FIS and some factions of the FLN."<sup>34</sup> Political accommodation of the Islamists posed a direct threat to the military. They felt the technocrats were trying to make a deal that benefited their desires instead of Algeria's needs. The result would be a reduction in the military's political autonomy and political capacity. If the generals waited to see how the Islamists might govern, the military might be weakened to the point where it would not be able to maintain order when the government failed again.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 103.

On January 11, 1992 the military forced Benjedid to dissolve the national assembly, and then resign his position. The result of these maneuvers was the negation of any lawful succession under constitutional law; the speaker of the assembly could not fill Benjedid's position, because the dissolution of the assembly meant the termination of the office. In the place of constitutional rule, the military instituted a five member High Security Council (HCE). Although the military as an institution would play a major role in the policies formulated by this group, it preferred to operate behind the scenes where its institutional autonomy and integrity were less likely to be questioned. As a result, one of the military's first acts was to invite Mohammed Boudiaf back from his self-imposed exile to lead the government. Boudiaf had been one of the nine original members of the FLN, but had broken with the party during the first year of independence for a twenty-six year self imposed exile in Morocco. The military felt his background and integrity would give their policies a great deal of social legitimacy, helping them to win the hearts and minds of those sectors of the population that had been ambivalent toward an Islamist government. However, while Boudiaf had certainly sacrificed for his beliefs, his selection did not necessary mean a continuation of Algeria's political transformation. Instead:

[Boudiaf's] itinerary was at once his strength and weakness, for despite his reputation for political integrity, his long absence left him without a powerbase in Algeria. He gambled that he could steer the country between the dual shoals of the old FLN order and the new Islamism while averting a complete takeover by the army. He believed he could rally a 'silent majority' behind his own conception of a grand patriotic secular party.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Mortimer. "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algerian War." p. 26.

Boudiaf's actions served to demonstrate that he would not be a front man for the military's policies. He did not support the army's authoritarian plan any more than he had Ben Bella's agenda in the 1960s. Instead he called for, "The termination of prerogatives enjoyed by the FLN in order to weaken the attraction of the FIS whose political program was focused on the privileges accumulated by the FLN regime."<sup>36</sup>

## **2. Militarization of the Regime**

Boudiaf's refusal to comply with the army's draconian crackdown made him a liability instead of an asset. He may have criticized the Islamists use of the mosques for political purposes, but his refusal to ban them from the political process was unacceptable. Additionally, he demanded that the military undertake a number of confidence-building efforts to reassure the populace of the government's intentions. For starters, he felt the government should close the detention camps where Islamists had been detained without trial since the coup, and the FIS's political leadership should be released to participate in a dialogue of national reconciliation amongst the nation's political parties.

Less than six months after he returned, Boudiaf was assassinated by a member of his security detail. Despite the fact that these individuals were selected from amongst the army's best officers, a subsequent military investigation blamed 'radical Islamists' for his death. However, with regard to domestic political opinion, the military's investigation raised more questions than answers, suggesting that the army was the source of Boudiaf's

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<sup>36</sup> Zoubir, p. 104.

end.<sup>37</sup> Subsequent to his death, the military declared that the country's deteriorating security situation necessitated a two year state of emergency. If Boudiaf could not help the military when he was alive, perhaps his corpse could do better.

### **3. The Rise of Political Violence**

With the military-backed government intent upon suppression instead of reconciliation, it was not long before the political impasse led to a military struggle. With Boudiaf dead, there was no place for moderates within the government. Meanwhile, the abrogation of the elections severely discredited the Islamic movement's politicians. The cleavage between the two groups threatened to tear the state apart. Rapid social decay means the disintegration of the trust that binds a society together. The previously united civil society began to fragment along associational lines. Dissident groups not only distrusted each other as much as they distrusted the military and the Islamists. In such an environment, political compromise would be extremely difficult.

With regard to the Islamists, military suppression severely hindered its ability to function as a front. Previously, it had maintained the coalition by providing a balanced leadership; Madani represented the moderates while Benhadj spoke for the radicals. With both leaders held incommunicado by the military, there was little that could be done to prevent it from fragmenting. The moderates wanted to use the legitimacy of their electoral victory to persuade the international community to bring pressure on the military regime to reach a settlement with the FIS. Meanwhile the radical wing, which had

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<sup>37</sup> Mortimer. "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algerian War." p. 27.

opposed submitting Islam to the electoral process in the first place, declared *Jihad* and began to attack government facilities in the same way their fathers and grandfathers had 30 years earlier.



### III. POLITICAL ISLAM IN ALGERIA

The West has been hesitant to support the FIS's claim to power due to fear of what an Islamic Algeria would mean for regional stability and European security needs. Are these fears based upon the specific agenda put forth by the FIS, or a general misunderstanding of political Islam? This chapter will show the differences amongst Islamic groups in Algeria, and demonstrate that the FIS was the moderate wing of Islamic resistance. The suppression of this political movement was responsible for the emergence of the radicals and the start of the ongoing civil conflict.

Since the Iranian revolution, the international community has had a difficult time accepting any Islamic-based political movement. In general, no matter how corrupt the regime, the West has been willing to back secular authoritarianism over religious plurality. There is a widely held perception that Islamic revivalism is counter to Western interests and culture, and thus a threat to be opposed. As John Esposito, the director of Georgetown University's Center for Christian-Islamic Understanding, notes:

The easy path is to view Islam and Islamic revivalism as a threat - to posit a global Pan-Islamic threat, monolithic in nature, a historic enemy whose faith and agenda are diametrically opposed to the West. . . . Just as simply perceiving the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe through the prism of the 'evil empire' had its costs, so too the tendency of American administrations and the media to equate Islam and Islamic activism with Qaddafi/Khomeini and thus with radicalism, terrorism, and anti-Americanism had seriously hampered our understanding and conditioned our responses.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth and Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 169.

Judging all of Islam by the actions of a few select groups would be the equivalent of judging American culture on the basis of the Unabomber and the Freemen. The worldwide Islamic revival is not monolithic, and in many cases is quite compatible with Western interests. In fact, As John Entelis notes, "Most Islamic movements have moved toward a more popular, pluralistic political stance, champion democratization, human rights and economic reform. . . .To varying degrees . . .all have emphasized change not through force. . .but through the political and social transformation of society."<sup>39</sup>

In Algeria's case, the Algerian military and their French allies have been very effective at portraying the Islamic insurgency as the second coming of the Iranian revolution. By doing so, they hope to prevent the movement from receiving any significant political support from the West. This is a good tactical move, but prior to the military coup there were few indications that Algeria's Islamists had a radical agenda that threatened the West. Islamic revivalism in Algeria offered little danger of a second Iran. There is a world of difference between the Sunni nationalism found in Algeria and the Shi'ite revolution found in Iran. Accepting the Algerian military's viewpoint *prima facie* not only does a disservice to the Islamic movement in Algeria, it produces faulty policy in the West. The reality is that there are a number of significant differences between the various Islamic revivals underway today. The FIS never sought to recreate Iran.

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<sup>39</sup> John Entelis, "Congressional Testimony." in United States Congress, *Hearing before the House Subcommittee on Africa: Recent Developments in North Africa, September 28, 1994* (Washington: U.S. GPO, 1995) p. 17.

Understanding what the movement was, and what power it retains today is crucial in determining what role it could play in Algeria's future.

## **A. POLITICAL ORGANIZATION**

While the FIS was not completely inclusive, it is important to remember that it was a front, instead of a pure political party. Under the general organizational banner of Islam, it was able to assimilate a number of extremely diverse interests. Members included radical militants, educated elites, and Algeria's emerging commercial class. At all times the FIS was many things to many people. As a result, it was easy for Western analysts to point to the rhetoric of the radical elements and claim that the movement posed a direct threat to Western interests. However, while the FIS could not control the behavior of every faction claiming membership, closer examination reveals that there was a solid consensus on key issues amongst those in the political center. Furthermore, the odds were that this group of Western educated moderates would have been able to control the party's actions.

### **1. Leadership**

While analysts quote religious extremists to hype the threat, the reality is that Algeria's democratic transition had more in common with the third wave transitions of Eastern Europe than with the violent revolution of Iran.<sup>40</sup> While Iran's turmoil resulted from a religious-based backlash against rapid modernization, the Algerian crisis was prompted by an advanced civil society's withdrawal of support for an authoritarian state.

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<sup>40</sup> For a good example of analysts generalizing about Islamic revivalism on the basis of selected quotes see Edward Shirley, "Is Iran's present Algeria's future?", *Foreign Affairs* (Spring 1995)

Further-more, while Iran's transition took the form of a violent revolution, the Islamic movement in Algeria initially sought inclusion, and attempted to change state behavior through the political system. Islam was the basis for the movement's identity, but the FIS had no intention of imitating the authoritarian regime of the Ayatollahs. As a *Middle East International* article noted in 1992, "While the top leadership of the FIS may be in the hands of individuals bearing the titles 'Sheik' and 'Imam' . . . the group is not run by an organized clerical hierarchy, abominated by Sunni Islam."<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, while the Iranian revolution was led by the Mullahs, the leadership of the FIS was drawn from amongst the states technocratic elites. As Esposito writes, "[the FIS] has gained particular support among recent university graduates and young professionals . . . contrary to popular assumptions their strength is not so much in the religious faculties and the humanities as in science, engineering, education, law and medicine."<sup>42</sup> In fact, 76% of the front's candidates for the 1990 municipal elections and the 1991 parliamentary elections held postgraduate degrees.<sup>43</sup> The party's nominal leader, Abassi Madani holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of London and his titular second in command, Ali Benhadi was a high school teacher. Rebah Kebir, who heads the movement's activities abroad section was a professor of Physics at the University of Algiers. By any account, while the movement's rank and file may have been

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<sup>41</sup> "The Impact of the FIS Success", *Middle East International*, (January 10, 1992) p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> John Esposito, "Political Islam: Beyond the Green Menace", *Current History*, (January 1994) p. 21.

<sup>43</sup> Esposito, "Political Islam: Beyond the Green Menace.", p. 21.



culled from the uneducated and dispossessed youths of Algeria, the same cannot be said for its leaders. The individuals atop the FIS could have flourished quite well within the existing Algerian power structure had they not been bound by their convictions.

## **2. Political Culture**

Since the front's leadership emerged from Algeria's educated elites, they understood the importance of developing a broad base of political support. This aspect of the FIS is often overlooked by Western analysts. Robert Mortimer summarizes such views well when he claims that, "observers likened the Islamist movement to a nebula because of its diffuse and indistinct nature, the vagueness of its programs, and the diversity of its attitudes . . . the FIS cultivated ambiguity as to its concrete policy intentions, exploiting its irreproachable image as a party of God."<sup>44</sup> Following this line of reasoning, the FIS was able to hoodwink the populace and capture the protest vote directed against the FLN, thus winning the elections.

However, while the FIS, like all political movements, undoubtedly benefited from an ambiguous political platform this reasoning does not explain why the FIS received the largest share of the popular vote. At its creation in 1990, the FIS was one of more than 30 political movements, five of which were Islamic in nature. Thus, the FIS could not even lay sole claim to the mantle of Islam. Furthermore, while it was able to build a coalition of several divergent groups, the movement was not organized around personalities. The FIS did not have a charismatic nationally known figure like former

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<sup>44</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algeria War", p. 23.



president Ben Bella, the leader of the rival Movement for Democracy in Algeria (MDA). As a result, other conditions must have contributed to the movement's overwhelming electoral victory.

In fact, the success of the FIS can be attributed to two interrelated factors; its organizational capacities and its vision for Algeria. These determinants convinced a majority of the populace not only that the FIS would implement the policies they proposed, but that these tenets would benefit them personally. The clearest proof of this is the party's victory in the first round of the 1991 parliamentary elections. It is important to remember that this was in fact the second democratic election in Algeria. The municipal elections of 1990 provided the first opportunity for the public to express its discontent through the ballot box. In that contest, "The FIS captured two large blocs of voters; those genuinely attracted to the Islamist message and those who were tired of the old order represented by the FLN."<sup>45</sup> When the 1991 elections were concluded, Western analysts pointed to the loss of more than 1 million votes as a sign that the populace was disenchanted with the movement. In reality however, this drop represents the loss of the second bloc of voters; those who had voted for the FIS only as a protest against the FLN's 28 year rule. Considering the proliferation and increased organizational capacities of other political movements, the FIS victory was a clear sign that it retained a popular mandate. Furthermore, although its members had been in office for a little more than a

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<sup>45</sup> Mortimer, "Islam and Multiparty Politics in Algeria.", p. 584.

year, the FIS's victory in the 1990 election allowed it to run upon an established legislative record. The populace knew how it intended to govern, and supported its campaign.

*a. Political Agenda*

The FIS's main goal was the implementation of Sharia, and the return of the state to a strictly Islamic society. In such an arrangement, there would no longer be any difference between church and state. Islam was an all embracing creed of behavior.

As noted Arabist Philip Hitti observed:

The prescriptions of . . . Sharia . . . regulate for the Moslem his entire life in its religious, political and social aspects. They govern his marital and civil relations as well as his relations with non-Moslems. Accordingly ethical conduct derives its sanctions and inhibitions from the sacred law.<sup>46</sup>

More than anything, it is the threat of Sharia that raised fears in the West. Analysts envisioned an authoritarian regime operating along the lines of Iran and the Sudan. The result would be crisis after crisis, weakening Algeria's Maghreb neighbors, and prompting a massive flood of refugees into Europe. However, these fears resulted from too shallow of an examination of what Sharia actually entailed. The West was quick to pick up upon Ali Benhadj's claim that the vote was, "not a victory of democracy, but a victory for Islam."<sup>47</sup> Conciliatory statements by leaders such as Abassi Madani made little difference. Fear of another Iran, this time directly on Europe's periphery made it unlikely that the West would accept any regime that staked its legitimacy upon Sharia.

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<sup>46</sup> Phillip Hitti, *History of the Arabs, 10th Ed*, (London: Macmillian Press, 1970) p. 400.

<sup>47</sup> Zoubir: 96.

However, the simple fact is that prior to the coup, Madani's centrist faction was clearly in control of the movement. The announced goal of these moderates was a gradual implementation of Sharia, commitment to democracy, and tolerance for divergent political views. This was possible because of their interpretation of Sharia's requirement that government rulers periodically consult the people as a basis for the continuation of democratic elections. As Faisal Kutty, a writer for the pro-Islamic magazine *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* noted, "Islamic law has been created through interpretation, and hence the legal rules, as opposed to the underlying principals, can be reformulated to meet contemporary situations."<sup>48</sup> Thus, the Islamists could claim that under the right social conditions the Sharia would be able to function as an instrument of law.

Furthermore, in concentrating on those aspects of Sharia antithetical to Western mores, analysts missed the bigger picture with regard to Sharia in Algeria. There is no question that certain groups such as Francophone elites and educated women would have suffered disproportionate losses in status and privilege when Sharia was implemented. However, the general population did not back the FIS merely to force women to wear the chador and close discos. The FIS garnered popular support because of what the Sharia declared that the state owed society in return for their compliance and religious fealty. For decades, party elites had amassed great fortunes at the expense of the

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<sup>48</sup> Faisal Kutty, "Islam and the West: Coexistence or Confrontation", *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, (January 1996) p. 34.

common people. After decades of socialist mismanagement, the populace was looking an alternative that could improve the government's attentiveness to their needs. As interpreted by the mainstream FIS, the populace believed that Sharia could form the basis for this social contract. As Mortimer writes:

When an earthquake struck the region west of Algiers in November 1989, the FIS was the first group to bring aid to the victims, well before government supplies arrived on the scene. Beyond this impressive operation, the party set up a network of medical clinics and other services in the poorest neighborhoods of Algeria's crowded cities. . . . By its social welfare and relief activities, and its control of the free mosques, the FIS positioned itself to compete well in elections.<sup>49</sup>

Some might sum these actions as pandering; interpreting it as an effort to 'buy' the votes of the disenfranchised urban masses. However, the simple fact is that the FIS delivered services that the government was unwilling or unable to provide to its people. It thus demonstrated that a return to strict construction of the Sharia would mean a government that would be responsive to the population's needs.

Indications of how the FIS would govern Algeria are best demonstrated by its behavior during its brief period of control at the local and state level following the 1990 elections. The militants raised societal fears by immediately focused on restructuring society. As Mortimer noted, "some newly elected town councils closed movie theaters and coeducational schools . . . Zealots harassed women in Western dress in the streets."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Mortimer, "Islam and Multiparty Politics in Algeria", p. 579.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 586.



Enforcement of these measures varied widely from city to city, depending on local official's interpretation of Sharia. However, it is important to not that whatever the interpretation, within that jurisdiction, the law was applied equally to all. The special status given to FLN party members was no longer recognized. As a result, "From the perspective of the urban poor, the FIS is credited for providing order and efficiency through a system of social discipline, equal justice for all and swift punishment. Such measures were appreciated by those living in fear of street toughs, petty criminals and troublemakers."<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, with the exception of the secular elites who had the most to lose, the populace was more concerned with the party's efforts to improve the efficacy of government service. An excellent example are the actions of the city council of Algiers. Garbage had piled up for weeks due to a wage dispute between the FLN run city government and the sanitation union. When the FIS took power, they mobilized their supporters to clean the city. Such actions may have been outside the scope of normal governance, but with the all-embracing requirements of Sharia, it was proper for leaders to call upon the people to assist in solving a problem.

In addition to building support amongst the general populace, the FIS received critical support from Algeria's emerging business interests. Wherever they had control over the economy, the FIS sought to increase economic liberalization. When Algeria was ruled by the FLN, the state's socialist nature meant the concentration of

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<sup>51</sup> United States Congress, p. 26.



wealth and industry in the state-owned corporations. While state elites benefited tremendously from such arrangements, they were extremely inefficient. To force the populace to accept centralized planning, the state taxed independent commercial interests at an exorbitant rate. This led merchants to cut back or funnel their products into the parallel economy.

However, the Islamists were great believers in a free market economy. In the districts they controlled, the FIS encouraged small business owners to reestablish the traditional *souks*, or markets, which had been suppressed by the FLN to facilitate dependence upon their own centralized distribution network. Business owners and the urban poor welcomed an alternative to the national government's patrimonial networks, which led to their strong show of support in the 1991 national elections. By focusing on social restrictions, the west lost sight of the economic liberalization and increased efficacy that resulted from Islamic rule.

*b. Support Base*

However strong the support, the diversity of the movement posed problems for the FIS. Since it functioned as a front, it incorporated a wide diversity in interpretations of Sharia, and plans for implementation. As Kutty admits, "The movement is composed of divergent groups . . . There are significant differences among adherents over their visions of an Islamic state and the routes to achieve it."<sup>52</sup> Madani's group of moderates may have been dominant at the time of the municipal elections, but there was

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<sup>52</sup> Kutty, p. 34.

no guarantee that it would stay in charge, or remain conducive to western interests. This is especially true when the group's reaction to the Gulf War is considered.

The FIS initially condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. It felt that the invasion was unwarranted, and since they had previously received a modest stipend from Saudi Arabia, the action threatened their interests. However, when the international community began to put troops in Saudi Arabia, their attitude changed abruptly. Benjedid called for the deployment of the Algerian military to help defend Islam from the West, while Madani flew to Baghdad to meet with Saddam Hussein in a sign of Arab loyalty. In such an environment, Europe's growing uneasiness about Algeria under the rule of the FIS is quite understandable.

However, the Islamist's behavior during the Gulf War must be viewed in the context of Algeria's domestic political situation. While it is true that an engagement between a Western-dominated coalition and an Arab nation undoubtedly inflamed the masses, the leadership of the FIS was using the crisis as an opportunity to gain power vis-à-vis the government and the army. The FIS called upon the government to train a popular militia, and deploy the army to help defend Iraq; actions that it knew the government would be unwilling to accomplish. In fact, the FIS was using the Gulf War as an opportunity to showcase the weakness of both institutions to the general populace. The Gulf War was a case where a fellow Arab state was under attack by the West, and yet the government did nothing. Thus, government inaction provided an opportunity for opposition parties to score points with the general populace. The FIS's rhetoric was

meant to hoist the army on its own petard. “The FIS. . .accused the Algerian military of having failed to fight on the side of Iraq and questioned its ability to defend the country.”<sup>53</sup> Since the army drew its institutional legitimacy from its role in the defense of Algeria from Western domination, the army’s unwillingness to help a fellow Arab state must mean that it no longer fulfilled its mandate, and was therefore illegitimate, and not to be respected.

Furthermore, the FIS’s anti-Western stance was not exceptional in the country at that time. Almost every major party condemned an American and European presence in the Gulf. Benjedid undertook a round of shuttle diplomacy to states including France, Jordan, and Egypt before declaring that he could not create a consensus for a diplomatic solution, while condemning Western interference. Furthermore, Madani was not alone in visiting Iraq. A slew of Algerian politicians including former president Ben Bella visited Baghdad in a show of ‘Arab solidarity.’ Viewed in the context of such actions, the FIS’ behavior was not that radical. Instead of expressing an overwhelming hatred for the West, the FIS attempted to exploit a foreign crisis for domestic political gain. Unfortunately, it also garnered more enmity from the army.

## **B. CENTER VS. PERIPHERY**

### **1. Fundamentalists vs. Neofundamentalists**

While all evidence pointed toward an Algeria led by the moderates, an Islamic victory would have meant some divisiveness within the FIS. Fundamentalists like Madani

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<sup>53</sup> Zoubir, p. 98.

wanted the nation to return to an Islamic way of life. They embraced a traditional interpretation of Sharia, and promised tolerance toward civil society. In governing Algeria however, they would have had to contend with neofundamentalists that were suspicious of the West, opposed to education and rights for women, and felt that modernization was wrong. Like the post-independence FLN, an Islamic victory would have meant intraparty competition, and the emergence of governing coalitions.

## **2. Islamic Interaction with Civil Society**

In this competition, it was most likely that the moderates would have emerged dominant. This faction comprised the movement's educated elites and they possessed the organizational capability to outlast whatever fragmented opposition emerged from the ranks of the neofundamentalists. The moderates would have won for the same reason Ben Bella had won Algeria's first presidency; the weakness of the political opposition. The strength of the moderate's coalition is important, because it outlines how the FIS would have interacted with civil society.

In fact, strong ties between the FIS, the secular political movements, and civil society at large was an extremely important goal for Madani. The French had predicted that Islamic rule would result in hundreds of thousands of refugees; most from the state's educated elites. Madani sought to prevent this by repeatedly assuring this group that it would not be unduly singled out for punishment. The target of Islamic rage was the corrupt socialist government, not society at large. He realized that his program of social



transformation was dependent upon the economic stability that could only be obtained by a good working relationship between the Islamic state and its civil society.

Thus, while civil society distrusted the Islamic mobs, there was genuine respect for Madani's integrity, and his willingness to adhere to established political rules. In fact, while the FIS had rejected the possibility of coalition rule, it had a good record of cooperating with other political parties in the attainment of mutually satisfactory goals. For example, when opposing the FLN's parliamentary gerrymandering, the FIS staged its political protests in conjunction with movements as diverse as the FFS and the MDA. Additionally, following the parliamentary victory, the FIS acted cautiously within the boundaries of established political rules. As Yahia Zoubir writes, the FIS: 1) sought a political compromise with the president; 2) attempted to reach an understanding with a faction of the FIS; and 3) did not insist on Benjedid's resignation.<sup>54</sup>

### **C. RADICAL ISLAM**

The FIS's willingness to adhere to standard political rules would have done much to alleviate the political violence that currently rages in Algeria. In all probability however, had the FIS's victory been allowed to stand, the government would have still faced a disloyal opposition. In fact, the problem would have been similar to that faced by the FLN during the early days of Algerian independence. With its victory consolidated, the FIS would have had to deal with the painful questions of who would rule, and what interpretation of Sharia would the nation be subject. The FIS's neofundamentalists were

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 96.



already distrustful of democracy and would have been extremely upset by the tolerance and political compromise promised by Madani. Much as the *Wilalya* combatants had initially refused to acquiesce to FLN's rule, the FIS would have had a difficult time convincing the neofundamentalists-fundamentalists to accept a gentle interpretation of Sharia.

However, while there is a high probability that political violence would have emerged, it is extremely unlikely that it would be anywhere near the scale Algeria has suffered over the past five years. A FIS victory would have brought increased legitimacy and efficacy to the central government, limiting the disloyal opposition's ability to garner a large following. Since the Algerian insurgency is domestic in nature, the militants would therefore be isolated and largely ineffective. The lack of popular support would have denied them access to safe areas and resources. As a result, Algeria would not have been subject to the mass conflagration underway today. When the Islamic movement fractured, the moderate faction could have retained control of the FIS and worked in conjunction with mainstream political parties to maintain the support of the general populace.

With the coup however, any possibility of compromise between the Islamists, the secular democrats, and the military was trampled. The situation quickly deteriorated into open conflict, with civil society trapped between the Islamists and the army. For the Islamists, the imprisonment or exile of its top leaders exacerbated the movement's fragmentation. In fact, two completely different groups of militants emerged to challenge the state. The first faction remained loyal to the FIS's imprisoned political leadership.

This group was composed largely of fundamentalists, and had strongly endorsed the political process. The second group drew its strength from Algeria's neofundamentalists. They had always distrusted democracy, and declared jihad on the state, the FIS, or any other group that failed to back the immediate implementation of a strictly Islamic society. Some describe this as a mere division of labor; similar groups using different tactics to achieve the same ends.<sup>55</sup> In reality however, these differences illustrate the diversity of the Islamic movement. The variation in targets and tactics reflect differences in the insurgent group's goals.

### **1. Roots of Resistance**

The initial movement into political violence came from the remnants of the Bouyali band.<sup>56</sup> During the late 1970s and early 1980s, this group of fundamentalists had waged war against the socialist state through a series of irregular guerrilla campaigns. However, the group was unable to achieve a mass following due to the large profits Algeria received from its gas and oil exports. The FLN's rule was inefficient, but the revenue flow allowed it to maintain its patronage networks quite well. As a result, the band was limited tactically to harassing military outposts in the Atlas mountains and the Sahara Desert.

In 1987, state security was able to track down and kill the group's leader Mustapha Bouyali. Without centralized command the movement quickly disintegrated. However,

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<sup>55</sup> This school of thought argues that democracy and Islam are incompatible, and that the West should support those regimes facing an Islamic opposition. For an example see Daniel Pipes. "There are No Moderates: Dealing with Fundamentalist Islam", *The National Interest* (Fall 1995)

<sup>56</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algeria War", p. 27.

the movement fragmented over leadership issues, not a crisis of belief. As a result, these veterans were amongst the first to embrace the FIS when Benjedid liberalized the political system. Given their history however, the Bouyalists were extremely suspicious of the government's willingness to allow free and fair competition. This group felt Islamists would have to be prepared to force the government to accept the will of the people. Thus, the Bouyalists and their supporters began to collect and store weapons prior to the coup. In fact, before the first round of elections had even taken place, Islamists were raiding outlying military outposts.<sup>57</sup>

When Madani and Benhadj were arrested, there was little the moderates could do to dissuade this faction from returning to the military option. When the FIS was officially banned, the Bouyalists turned to guerrilla activity as the only available strategic option. This time however the bonds between state and society had frayed to the point where the new militants received the type of support Mustapha Bouyali could have only dreamed about. While the Bouyali band had been limited to raiding the periphery, the new groups could strike at the heart of the state. Society would provide them with the necessary materiel, safe houses, and intelligence to press their attacks.

## **2. The Armed Islamic Movement (MIA)**

The militant wing of the FIS took a name at a 'congress' held in April 1992.<sup>58</sup> It became the Armed Islamic Movement (MIA) under the leadership of former Bouyalist

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

Abdelkader Chebouti.<sup>59</sup> Although some western analysts lump this group with the extremists, the MIA is the closest to 'legitimate' combatants that can be found in Algeria. At every step of its evolution the MIA has claimed that it remains loyal to the FIS parliamentary mission in exile. Its military actions are designed to pressure the government to negotiate with the Islamists, and whenever possible it informs the political wing of its strategic intentions in advance. In fact, the political wing has traditionally had the power to appoint the MIA's top leader. Indeed, following Chebouti's death, when Madani Merzak was named the new leader, the MIA stressed that the only reason the FIS's imprisoned leadership was not consulted was a breakdown in their communications network.<sup>60</sup>

The MIA's goal is to force the military to negotiate with the FIS to end the current impasse. This is important, not only because it clearly demonstrates the MIA's subservience to the politicians of the FIS, but because it shows that the movement never intended to seize power via revolutionary means. Indeed, while the MIA might possess the political capability to mobilize popular support, it has steadfastly refused to insert itself into the void left by the imprisonment or exile of the FIS' political leaders.

The best proof of this is found in the MIA's tactics and targeting. While the MIA has had a number of opportunities to inflict damage, it is extremely selective about what

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<sup>59</sup> Hugh Roberts, "Algeria between Eradicators and Conciliators", *Middle East Report*. (July 1994) p. 24.

<sup>60</sup> FBIS NES-95-052, "FIS Leaders not Consulted", *Paris AFP* (March 17 1995)



comprises a valid target. This restraint is not due to lack of resources. Indeed, the movement has consistently been able to maintain itself by pillaging government supplies. Instead it is due to the MIA's adherence to the FIS's political goals. Since the goal is to force the government to negotiate a political solution, the MIA realizes that the FIS needs the trust and support of civil society. When there is a good chance of collateral damage, the MIA announces its intentions well before the campaign to give Algerian civilians a chance to withdraw. A good example of this was a recent communiqué warning of impending activity against the state-controlled gas and oil industry. Whenever possible, the MIA attempts to avoid damage to non-government commercial interests, foreigners, and society at large. As Hugh Roberts writes:

The MIA has been content to attack security forces and low-level functionaries, especially local government officials appointed by the central government in place of the elected FIS members. Its behavior has been consistent with a strategy of applying pressure to make the regime regret its decision to ban the FIS and to induce the government to readmit the substance of radical Islamism to the political process.<sup>61</sup>

### **3. The Armed Islamic Group (GIA)**

The caution and restraint exhibited by the MIA displeased the neofundamentalists. To them, the MIA's political subservience and targeting limitations were clear signs that the moderates lacked a real commitment to an Islamic Algeria. The neofundamentalists had been distrustful of the democratic process from the beginning. Islam could not be submitted to the whims of a capricious society; instead the people must be forced to

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<sup>61</sup> Roberts, p. 25.



submit. When the army took over, and the FIS sought negotiations instead of Jihad, the neofundamentalists felt betrayed. In this sector's opinion, FIS was no better than its secular opponents. Instead of reaching a political settlement, the neofundamentalists would force Algeria to accept their interpretation of Sharia at the point of a sword. As Mortimer writes, "The descent into chaos marked the emergence of a second generation of Islamic militants inspired, but not necessarily controlled by the FIS of Abassi Madani."<sup>62</sup>

The neofundamentalists coalesced into the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in early 1993. While the Bouyali band had been prominent in the formation of the MIA, the GIA drew its leaders from Algerian veterans of Afghanistan. This is only fitting, because the movement's organizational structure resembles that of the Mujahadeen. Although it is often portrayed as a unified entity, the GIA is an umbrella organization of at least four different groups. They share a common vision, but there is little coordination, centralized control, or transfer of resources amongst their factions. As Roberts writes, "These groups appear to be more or less autonomous but share a refusal to negotiate with the state and a penchant for ferocious and savage attacks."<sup>63</sup>

In fact, the GIA bears a closer resemblance to a criminal organization than a political movement. Its factions are extremely defensive of their territorial claims, and they have fought each other, as well as the government. It completely refuses to

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<sup>62</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algerian War", p. 27.

<sup>63</sup> Roberts, p. 25.

coordinate activities with the MIA. Indeed, when an element of the MIA defected to the GIA, its leadership was 'tried' and executed. The GIA's suspicious nature meant that it would accept combatants, but not any impingement upon its freedom of action.

While its internal working are flawed, the GIA has few problems maintaining a high operational tempo. Despite its small numbers, the GIA is responsible for much of the damage in Algeria today. While the MIA seeks to force a political solution, the GIA wants to completely destabilize society. The GIA appears to pick individual targets at random, but there is a distinct pattern to their operations. While it attacks government facilities, the preferred target is civil society. This is the group that kills women for failing to veil themselves in public. They are responsible for the assassinations of journalists, Western-educated elites, and foreign business men. They seek to breed fear and distrust amongst civil society, demonstrating that the corrupt and illegitimate government cannot protect the people. The populace must accept Islam or suffer the consequences.

Furthermore, the GIA is the group that seeks to antagonize the West for its support of the military. In October 1993, it summarily announced that any foreigner found within Algeria's borders after December 1, 1993 would be slain.<sup>64</sup> Since then more than 100 foreigners have been killed. Victims have ranged from the crew of an Italian freighter anchored in Algiers, to foreign oil companies laboring in the Desert. By raising the costs of doing business in Algeria, the GIA hoped to end Western involvement.

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<sup>64</sup> Alfred Hermida, "Killing Foreigners", *Middle East International*, (December 17, 1993) p. 11.

Within the year however the group came to feel that a more direct approach was necessary to dissuade the West. European countries had cut back their direct involvement, but were still willing to give political and economic assistance to the military run government. The only solution was to carry the battle to the homeland of the government's major co-belligerent: France. The first international incident came with the hijacking of an Air France A300 airbus on December 24, 1994. Five gunman seized the plane as it prepared for departure from Algiers to Paris. As a sign of good faith, the gunmen released 60 passengers before the plane was given permission to take off. However, the authorization followed the deaths of three passengers including a French diplomat.<sup>65</sup> Due to the use of onboard systems during this 24 period, the plane no longer had enough fuel to make it to Paris. As such, the plane was diverted to Marseilles, where the GIA attempted to barter the lives of 150 other passengers, 40 of whom were French citizens, for the release of 16 GIA militants held in French custody.<sup>66</sup> After the gunmen killed an additional hostage, French commandos stormed the plane, killing all five terrorists. In response the GIA murdered four French priests in Algeria.<sup>67</sup>

When this attempt failed, the GIA graduated to a more direct approach. On July 26, 1995, the GIA initiated the first in a series of bombings on the Paris subway. In the following months, five additional bombing attempts, three of which were successful took

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<sup>65</sup> "Christmas Hell at Gunpoint", *The Mideast Mirror* (December 26, 1994) p. A1.

<sup>66</sup> "Aircraft Blocked in Algeria", *AP Newswire* (December 24, 1994)

<sup>67</sup> "GIA Claims Priests Murders", *Reuters Newswire* (December 27, 1994)

place.<sup>68</sup> In Europe, the bombings only heighten European uneasiness about the Algerian crisis, and served to strengthen the opposition to the political Islam of the FIS. This would clearly be counterproductive to a militant group attempted to force the government to negotiate, which indicates the clear differences between the GIA and the FIS. The GIA cares only about the jihad, and carrying the war to the supporters of its enemies. It is not interested in the public opinion battles waged by their moderate brethren.

#### **D. FUTURE POLITICAL CONTROL**

The GIA's independence and counterproductive tactics have bothered the FIS to no end. While the GIA conducts terrorist operations, more often than not, the entire Islamic movement is blamed for the event. In seeking to attain its goal, the GIA hinders the FIS's attempt to capture civil society. As a result, the FIS has been very consistent in its condemnation of the GIA's activities. In fact, its opposition to the GIA is so strong that prior to the bombings, the FIS actually warned Europe that it feared that, "Some kind of operation might take place in Britain or another European state to justify a campaign against FIS supporters."<sup>69</sup> As Abdelkarim Adda, a member of the FIS executive committee noted:

The FIS does not object to the French Government's decision to pursue or interrogate anyone who uses bombs to kill innocent people, since we reject that both religiously and as a principal. . . We condemn any excesses or acts of murder against innocent civilians, be they children, elderly women,

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<sup>68</sup> Robert Swann, "France: Tension Increases", *Middle East International*, (September 8, 1995) p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> FBIS-NES-95-049, "FIS Warns of 'Operation' in UK or European State." *AL-HAYAH* (March 14, 1995) A1.



employees, or intellectuals. . . Our problem is with those who denied the people's choice and who are oppressing the people now. No one else is our target.<sup>70</sup>

However, while the FIS has consistently denounced the GIA's actions, it has refrained from condemning the group itself. The FIS's leadership in exile still believes that it is possible to fuse the militant opposition into a single movement.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, on occasion the Washington representative, Anouar Haddam has even denied the existence of the GIA, attributing the violence to the government or low level criminal activity.<sup>72</sup> Government suppression of the FIS has weakened it to the point where it has difficulty confronting the GIA. These militants do not recognize the legitimacy of the party's parliamentary mission in exile, or accept limitations on their freedom of actions. As a result the FIS is desperately attempting to co-opt the GIA, while downplaying its acts. The only solution is to convince civil society to joint the FIS in pressuring the government to negotiate a political solution. As Abdelkkarim Adda stated, "If the causes of the confrontation are eliminated, we believe that the causes of the deadlock will have been eliminated . . . allowing the political jihad to return to the scene . . . . The armed Jihad is a means not an end."<sup>73</sup> In achieving this goal however, the FIS had to act soon. Attempts

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<sup>70</sup> FBIS-NES-95-202, "Adda on FIS Stance on Elections, Armed Actions", *AL-SHARQ AL AWSAT* (October 18, 1995) p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> FBIS-NES-95-058, "FIS Leader Urges Unification of Armed Groups", *Paris Radio France International* (March 25, 1995)

<sup>72</sup> FBIS-NES-96-067, "Algeria: Anouar Haddam on 'Two Trends' Within FIS", *AL-SHARQ AL AWSAT* (April 4, 1996) p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> FBIS-NES-95-202, p. 6.



to co-opt the GIA had utterly failed, while the Algerian government was succeeding in its attempt to convince the West that the FIS was responsible for the Islamic excesses. If the FIS could not strike a deal with civil society or the GIA, it would soon become irrelevant.

#### IV. EUROPEAN CONSIDERATIONS

The army may have been the force that seized power, but they were not alone in their opposition to a government formed by Islamists. Southern Europe was equally concerned with Islamic revivalism in the Maghreb. As a result, these states played a crucial role in the army's decision to seize power prior to the second round of elections. Furthermore, Europe provided the broad economic and political support that has allowed the government to survive the Islamic onslaught. As Laurence Whitehead noted, "Transitions that pose no risk to the existing system of external alliances, or strengthen economic ties are likely to succeed while transitions that threaten established interests are less likely to receive the necessary support, even if the same principles apply."<sup>74</sup> The Islamic opposition may have had a legitimate claim to power, but they were viewed as a threat to European social and economic interests. Thus, when given the opportunity to participate in the Algerian crisis, the majority of European states threw their support behind the military government. In doing so, European influence became a decisive factor in the form and methods of regime transformation.

##### A. HISTORICAL RELATIONS

European states are able to influence the outcome of the Algerian conflict due to the long history of economic and societal linkage between Southern Europe and North Africa. Despite Algeria's long and bloody struggle for independence, Southern European

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<sup>74</sup> Laurence Whitehead, "International Aspects of Democratization", *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, Guillermo O'Donnell, Phillippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) p. 275.

states, especially France emerged as its key partners for trade and development. Algeria may have linked its politics to non-alignment and Third World socialism, but it carefully linked its economic fortune to the Western capitalist states. In itself, this was not an unusual arrangement. In fact, “The recent history of post-colonial states has been characterized by political and economic ties with former metropolises.”<sup>75</sup> Although Algeria has tried to diversify its economic relations, France and other Southern European nations have remained at the forefront.

This has been the case since Algeria first gained its independence. Perversely, the destruction inflicted by the *colons* was a key factor in France’s ability to maintain strong economic ties to independent Algeria. With the flight of *colon* knowledge and capital that came with independence, Algeria needed outside assistance, and France was more than willing to provide it. Maintaining close ties to Algeria was an important goal of De Gaulle’s. It would help to maintain French hegemony in North Africa and enhance French stature amongst developing nations; a key policy goal after the recent loss of two colonial wars. As a 1964 *Le Monde* article noted, Algeria was to be the French “doorway to the Third World.”<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, close ties with Algeria would ensure French commercial access to the recently discovered mineral wealth in the Sahara.

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<sup>75</sup> Philip Akre, “Algeria and the Politics of Energy-Based Industrialization”, *State and Society in Algeria*, John Entelis and Phillip Naylor, eds., (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992) p. 73.

<sup>76</sup> Phillip Naylor, “French-Algeria Relations 1980-1990”, *State and Society in Algeria*, John Entelis and Phillip Naylor, eds., (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992) p. 217.

As a result of Algerian needs and French desires, there were more than 21,000 *cooperants*, or French aid programs, at work within Algeria during its first year of independence.<sup>77</sup> Throughout the early development phase, France and Algeria signed bilateral agreements such as the Algiers Accord of 1965, and the Convention on Technology and Cooperation of 1966. These allowed Algeria to develop the infrastructure it desperately needed. In return the French were able to temporarily retain the Saharan military bases vital to that nation's nuclear efforts and dominate Algerian mineral extraction.

### **1. Algerian Diversification**

At various times, Algeria did attempt to break this cycle of dependency. While French mineral exploitation allowed Algeria to develop infrastructure, the nature of the agreements vastly favored the French. Seeking to increase its share of the profits, Algeria nationalized its gas and oil industries in 1971. This was the beginning of an attempt to “turn from trade and economic cooperation dominated by France to a system of state cooperation under specified controls with a diverse range of foreign suppliers of capital and equipment.”<sup>78</sup> They were determined to broaden their international market to avoid complete control by Southern European nations. Indeed, a lucrative French offer for gas exploration following Algeria's nationalization was rejected outright.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Naylor, p. 217.

<sup>78</sup> Akre, p. 74.

<sup>79</sup> Naylor, p. 217.

The increased revenue from the nationalization of Algerian resources would play a crucial role in Boumedienne's attempt to speed the industrialization of the Algerian economy during the late 1960's and early 1970's. The government plan called for, "heavy industrialization based on revenues gained from the hydro-carbon industry."<sup>80</sup> For a limited time, this solution worked. Arrangements such as the 1968 joint venture between Algeria and the American-owned Getty Petroleum became the standard for foreign companies. Sonatrach, the state-owned oil company, acquired a 51 percent share in Getty operations in Algeria. Getty was also required to provide the money for further exploration, and a share of future profits.<sup>81</sup> In return, Getty received guaranteed production quotas, and exclusive marketing rights in the United States. By 1971, French corporations were forced to meet similar requirements. That same year, Algeria was able to expand the market for their second major commodity, natural gas. Algeria reached a deal with the American-owned El Paso Company for the export of 15 billion cubic meters of natural gas over a 25 year period.<sup>82</sup> Like Getty, El Paso would have exclusive rights to market its products within the United States, and in return finance the exploration of additional gas deposits in Algeria. Through the use of such contracts, trade between Algeria and the United States increased dramatically, and exploration companies began to

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<sup>80</sup> Akre, p. 78.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 89.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 79.



import the necessary equipment to explore for further gas and oil deposits. By 1976, the United States had replaced France as Algeria's largest trading partner.

## **2. Free Market Problems**

Algeria may have diversified its consumer base, but its export income was still completely dependent upon a single commodity. Basing heavy industrialization upon such financing is a very risky undertaking. The international economy is not bound by any commitments to develop the less fortunate states. Instead, consumers want the best product at the lowest possible price. Thus, this arrangement might suffice when there is a high demand for that export commodity, but when the market implodes, impartial trading partners will not be bound by the sympathies of the developing state's former colonial master.

Any fluctuations in gas and oil prices would produce severe consequences for Algeria. Oil revenues paid for some development, but they also provided the collateral for massive foreign loans taken in order to speed the process. Financing of the foreign debt had risen from 3.2% of export income in 1970 to 24.9% in 1980.<sup>83</sup> By 1982, its total foreign debt had risen to 7.7 billion.<sup>84</sup> If Algeria was unable to generate sufficient revenue from its single sector export, it would be unable to finance its foreign debt and forced to abandon the important industrialization efforts. When the United States and Western Europe were hit with recessions in the early 1980s, Algeria found itself in that

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 92.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 92.

exact quandary. It needed to maintain a strong cash flow to finance its foreign debt, while the buyers for its sole export commodity were unwilling to increase their purchases.

Algeria's solution was an attempt to link the price of Algerian liquefied natural gas (LNG) to oil prices. This would have brought the price per cubic meter up to \$6.11, nearly double the previous rate.<sup>85</sup> Such maneuvering did not sit well with Algeria's American customers, especially in light of the Mexico's financial crisis. In order to stave off financial disaster, Mexico was selling gas and oil at remarkably reduced rates; American companies could not only secure less expensive resources, they would have lower shipping costs. In 1980, contract negotiations with the El Paso company broke down. Its lucrative export arrangements were canceled, and American companies began to withdraw from the Algerian market. Algeria's export economy was once again based solely upon the European market.

### **3. The Reemergence of Europe**

The loss of the American market had tremendous repercussions for Algeria. It was forced to swallow its pride and accept a return to trade dominated by Europe. With their historical ties, these states would be more willing to accommodate mutual interests. Algeria needed European cash, while Europe needed Algerian energy. This arrangement provided short term solutions, but created even more long term problems. Algeria needed this cash to pay off debts incurred during the expansion of its gas and oil industries during the 1970's. In the long run however, such arrangements allowed the

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<sup>85</sup> Naylor, p. 222.

Europeans to influence Algerian decisions as to which sectors received further development. It should be of little surprise that the areas in which European states wanted to invest were gas and oil exploitation. In such a system of dependency the sectors that deal with the outside world often receive the majority of the revenue.

This second phase of European dependency was even more difficult on Algeria than the first. The attempts at industrialization had dramatically restructured the population. The urban population had quadrupled while rural agriculture had been terribly neglected. In fact, by the 1980s, Algeria could no longer sustain itself; it was forced to import food as well as manufactured goods. Throughout the decade, the nations of Southern Europe expanded their political and economic links with Algeria. More than 75% of the Algeria's exports went to the European community; more than 50% to Southern Europe alone.<sup>86</sup> In return however, the Maghreb played a minimal role in European trade. The entire region accounts for only 1% of European exports.<sup>87</sup>

The nature of Algeria's exports however, create a different reality than the statistics might indicate. Europe draws upon North Africa to meet a large percentage of its energy needs. This has been the case since 1983, when the first Trans-Mediterranean gas pipeline began pumping. This pipeline ships Algerian natural gas to Italy via a conduit that extends through Tunisia and under the Mediterranean. Today

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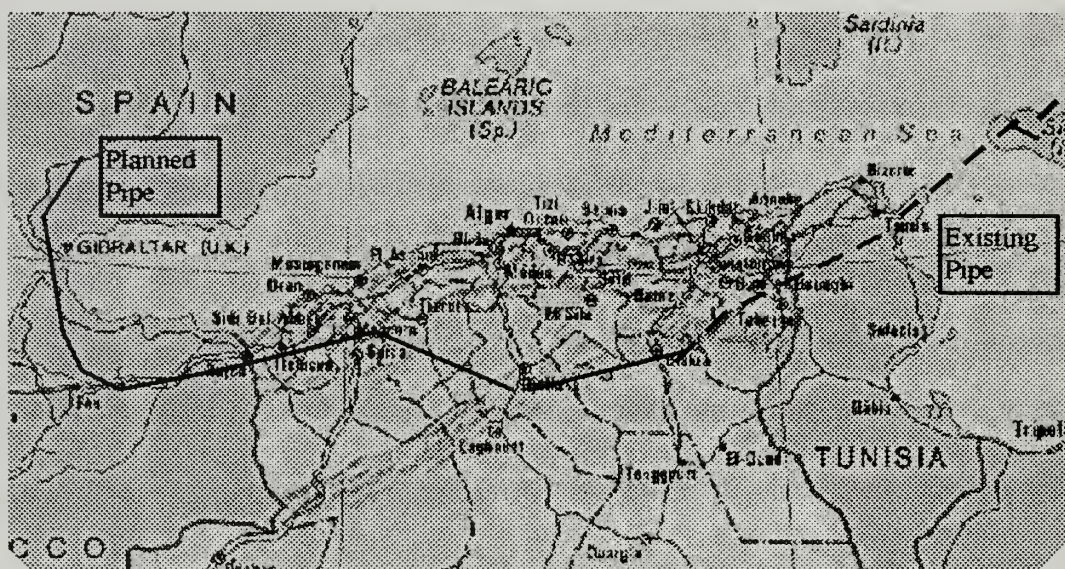
<sup>86</sup> Claire Spencer, *The Maghreb in the 1990s: Political and Economic Developments in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia* (London: Brassey's Press, 1993), p. 51.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p. 51.



work is underway to double the capacity of that pipeline, and a second is under construction for delivery of gas to Spain. In the future, the European Union hopes to link these lines to existing European networks, allowing more effective delivery to Portugal, France, and Germany.

### ROUTE OF NORTH AFRICAN GASLINES<sup>88</sup>



## B. EUROPE AND ISLAM

This new phase of economic relations between Europe and Algeria was more symbiotic than dependent. Algeria needed European technology and financial assistance for its development, but soaring energy requirements made Europe equally dependent on Algerian resources to meet its domestic energy needs. The Trans-Med pipeline currently provides more than 25% of Italy's domestic energy needs.<sup>89</sup> Projections are that it will be

<sup>88</sup> Data obtained from Warren True, "Trans-Med expansion nears start-up; Maghreb line nears construction", *Oil and Gas Journal* (Jan 17, 1994) pp. 50-51.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 51.

30% by the year 2000.<sup>90</sup> The Spanish pipeline under development has been identified by the government as the crucial element in easing the energy problems resulting from the 1990 failure of Spain's experimental reactor.<sup>91</sup>

The increased reliance upon Algeria's energy resources created enormous security problems for Southern Europe. Just as the United States is forced to maintain the political viability of Persian Gulf regimes to guarantee its oil, Europe had to maintain North African stability to ensure its natural gas supply. Thus, when the FLN began to lose control in 1988, the likelihood of political transition made European states nervous. They analyzed the regime's stability with regard to how its collapse would impact their needs. Thus, while they encouraged the formation of democratic systems, they worried about the effects of regime transition. European states and businesses had become quite adept at dealing with the patrimonial state-owned corporations that controlled the Algerian economy. Any transition that threatened these arrangements would be received very poorly.

Their fears were confirmed when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) emerged as the main opposition. This Islamic-based organization presented two distinct problems that forced Southern European states to rethink their security situation. First, the FIS was a direct threat to Europe's supply of North African natural gas. Leaders such as Ali Benhadj

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<sup>90</sup> Warren True, "Spain marking Progress in Expansion of Natural Gas Grid, Utilization", *Oil and Gas Journal* (July 25, 1994) p. 32.

<sup>91</sup> Aaron Segal, "Spain and the Middle East: A 15-Year Assessment", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 45 no. 2 (Spring 1991) p. 258.



had repeatedly threatened to “punish the Europeans for their colonial rule.”<sup>92</sup> European dependence upon Algerian gas had reached such a level that this alone would have meant European opposition. There was however an equally compelling reason. The possibility of a fundamentalist state within a few hundred miles of their borders made the Southern European nations fearful that they would face an influx of refugees, which would increase the size and alter the nature of their Moslem populations. The proximity made Europeans aware of the differences between themselves and their ethnic minorities. As B.A.

Roberson of Warwick University writes:

European countries in the postwar ear have become unintentionally multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. This has led to a blurring of the boundary between Europe and its periphery. The periphery has arrived in the heart of Europe. Although migrations have been recurring events in Europe, what makes them particularly cogent in the present situation has been their magnitude and character, and the economic conditions within which they have occurred. . . In these circumstances, the immigrant communities emerge as social problems.<sup>93</sup>

European states feared the linkages that they believed existed between their ethnic minorities, and Islamic movements abroad. France has a Moslem population of more than three million people, of which more than one million are of Algerian descent.<sup>94</sup> Italy’s Moslem residents, mostly Tunisian, number more than 200,000.<sup>95</sup> Spain’s population is

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<sup>92</sup> “Time to Turn Back”, *The Economist*, (Jan 29, 1994) p. 16.

<sup>93</sup> B. A. Roberson, “Islam and Europe: An Enigma or a Myth?” *Middle East Journal*, vol. 48. no. 2 (Spring 1994) p. 300.

<sup>94</sup> “Ugly Algeria” *The Economist*, (July 8, 1992) p. 19.

<sup>95</sup> “Something New out of Africa.” *The Economist*, (July 16, 1994) p. 41.

less ethnically diverse, but it realizes that its geographic location will make it the conduit for North Africans seeking refuge in France. At its closest point Spain is less than 30 miles from North Africa. As a result, it has already begun to run anti-smuggling patrols in the Strait of Gibraltar.

The nations of Southern Europe truly believed that political problems in North Africa would be detrimental to the Mediterranean as a whole. As an *Economist* editorial of the time noted, "It is only a matter of time before North Africa's troubles wash up on Europe's shores."<sup>96</sup> This is most visible in some of the more recent exercises held by the Western European Union (WEU). In exercises TRAMONTANA (1995) and ARDENT (1994), Spain, France and Italy undertook combined force operations practicing large scale evacuations, and sea area control; efforts clearly driven by the projected social problems they believe collapse in Algeria would produce for themselves.<sup>97</sup>

Fear of their own immigrant populations is most probably unfounded. As Roberson writes, "Government perceptions do not correspond with the fact that their immigrant communities are stable. . .they have been distorted by Islamist activities elsewhere that have occasionally impinged on European policies."<sup>98</sup> However, as with much in politics, the reality is not as important as the perception. Reactionary politicians such as Jean Marie Le Pen of the National Front in France can garner additional support

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<sup>96</sup> "Ugly Algeria", p. 18.

<sup>97</sup> William Lewis. "Algeria at the Brink." *Strategic Forum*. No. 32 (June 1995) p. 1.

<sup>98</sup> Roberson, p. 301.

by flaming fears of an invasion of hostile, uncivilized, Algerian refugees. For example, a French poll conducted in 1990 revealed that 61% of the population associated Islam with violence.<sup>99</sup> With an angry and upset majority, and the threat of being outflanked by their political opponents, politicians are less likely to be accommodating to the Islamists. For their own political survival, European politicians would be forced to address the fears of their populace. As a result, while continually expanding economic support for North Africa, European nations have attempted to isolate them socially. France began the trend in the winter of 1989 and was soon followed by the United Kingdom and Italy.<sup>100</sup> Spain followed suit in May 1991.<sup>101</sup> Today it is nearly impossible for an Algerian to receive a French visa. Due to the widespread social violence and attacks on foreign nationals, France has closed its consulates to the general public. Visa applications must be mailed, and 80% of these requests are denied.<sup>102</sup> From a high of 800,000 visas in 1988, France issued less than 100,000 in 1995.<sup>103</sup>

In this respect, domestic politics was an equally important factor in the European governments' decision to act against the democratic forces in Algeria. To Europe, the fear of Islamic revivalism was as important as the economic threat posed by the potential

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<sup>99</sup> Spencer, p. 49.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 52.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> "Visa Issue Complicated by Immigration Concerns" *Le Monde*, (February 3, 1995) p. 11.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

loss of their energy source. European states were not capable of accepting the growth in their minority communities that they believed would occur due to refugees from fundamentalism. The French position stated in 1994 sums up the European position quite nicely. As French foreign minister Alain Juppe, one of the more moderate politicians stated, "Generosity and fine sentiments are all very well, but the realities of the social balance in France also need to be taken into consideration. . .France cannot do everything."<sup>104</sup> Southern Europeans needed to protect their interests, and were willing to resort to supporting non-democratic movements to do so.

### **C. EUROPEAN INFLUENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS**

As a result, when it became apparent that the FIS would win the elections and gain control of the Algerian government, European states were concerned. They could afford a principled stand on democratization in Latin American and Eastern Europe but regime change in Algeria directly threatened their interests. Democracy in Latin America and Eastern Europe meant market expansion and increased opportunities for trade and development. In Algeria however, the FIS had already sworn to restructure the state's economic relations with Europe. Its desire to break up Algeria's inefficient centralized economy would have meant the end to the patrimonial system through which European companies gained access to Algerian markets. Europe's perception was that the democratic process would instill an equally authoritarian regime on its periphery, the difference being that an Islamic government would now be opposed to European interests.

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<sup>104</sup> "Something New out of Africa", p. 41.



Southern European states were concerned about an influx of refugees and the level of control the fundamentalist state would have over their energy needs. As a result, Algerian democratization was unacceptable and Europeans welcomed the military coup.

At most stages in the conflict's evolution, European states, led by France, gave unwavering support to the military regime. Additionally, these states expended a great deal of political capital to convince other nations to do the same. European actions ranged from political cover for the military's excessive repression to actively encouraging foreign investors to refinance loans and expand development. Without this assistance, the military regime would not have had sufficient access to the financial and political resources necessary to withstand the onslaught of the fundamentalists. In effect, Southern European support was the key factor in the conflict's longevity. The willingness of these states to support the military regime, despite the high cost to their own economic and security interests, allowed the military regime to pursue a hard-line policy. Furthermore, when key actors within the regime showed signs of weakening, European influence ensured that there would be little chance of compromise with the insurgents.

### **1. Financial Assistance**

One key aspect of European support has been its willingness to give the military regime the ability to finance its war. By the 1991 coup, Algeria's foreign debt had ballooned to \$21 billion.<sup>105</sup> During the next four years it increased at an annual rate of

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<sup>105</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook - 1991*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992) p. 5.



\$1.5 billion.<sup>106</sup> The government had instituted a 'war economy' to pursue the fundamentalist opposition. Despite this, Algeria never defaulted on its foreign loans. Whenever the government approached collapse, the European states would provide massive amounts of foreign aid or assist Algeria by restructuring its foreign debt.

Of the two, debt restructuring was the more important. The \$1 billion per year in aid given by France since the start of the crisis pales in comparison to the financial rewards of debt restructuring.<sup>107</sup> In this respect, the Paris Club of government creditors has been the most important institution. This French sponsored organization is a "multilateral forum established to help developing countries restructure their debts to governments and official guaranteed export credits."<sup>108</sup> Members include all the major European economic powers as well as Canada, the United States, and Japan. Its client base is all of developing world, but the real focus of its efforts are former French colonies. Through the use of this institution, the military regime and its European friends were able to reach the accommodations that eased Algeria's debt burden. Between 1991 and 1993, the Paris Club was instrumental in reprofiling \$2.7 billion in Italian debt and \$1.5 billion in French debt.<sup>109</sup> In 1994 it followed up these successes by rescheduling more than \$5 billion

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<sup>106</sup> Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook - 1994*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995) p. 6.

<sup>107</sup> Matthew Connelly. "Deja Vu All Over Again: Algeria, France and Us", *The National Interest*, (Winter 1995/96) p. 33.

<sup>108</sup> Thomas Klein. "Innovation in Debt Relief: The Paris Club", *Finance and Development*. (March 1992) p. 42.

<sup>109</sup> Jon Marks. "Against the Clock: Algeria reprofiles its debt", *The Banker*. (November, 1994) p. 74.

dollars in Algerian loans.<sup>110</sup> States participating in these arrangements included Canada, Germany, Spain, and Italy.<sup>111</sup>

When totaled, Paris Club restructuring eliminated or rescheduled more than 25% of Algeria's foreign debt. These actions lowered Algeria's debt service ratio, which allowed it to devote more of its export earnings to the war against fundamentalism. Furthermore, restructuring its debt made Algeria a more viable candidate for other forms of outside loans and assistance. Within months of the 1994 Paris Club negotiations, Algeria successfully negotiated a \$1 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for infrastructure development.

The European effort to help Algeria went far beyond influencing their own institutions. Time and again European states tied the Algerian situation to their own economic interests and prestige. They actively pressured their own trading partners to increase investment or reschedule Algerian loans. The clearest example of this was a trip by French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe to Japan in 1995. His linkage of Algerian economics and French trade was crucial in persuading Japan to reschedule 450 million dollars of debt.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> "Time to Help Algeria", *The Economist*, (February 18, 1995) p. 11.

<sup>111</sup> Marks, 74.

<sup>112</sup> "Balancing Growth with Development." *Project Trade and Finance*, (September 1994) p. A2.

## 2. Maintenance of the Hegemonic Sphere

European support for Algeria's military regime was not limited to economic assistance. In conjunction with financial aid, there was a strong push to garner international political support for the military regime. As one would expect, France was often the leader of this effort. Throughout the crisis, French officials often met openly with their Algerian counterparts. As an article in *Le Monde* noted after Phillipe Seguin, the Speaker of the French National Assembly visited Algeria in 1995, "the symbolic importance. . . is a way of showing that Paris clearly supports the regime."<sup>113</sup> France was not alone in these efforts. International events such as a 1993 Spanish conference on Mediterranean trade also highlights the importance than Southern Europe places on the Algerian regime. By demonstrating the importance, and raising international awareness, Southern European states can force other regional actors to become involved. This is very important, for the larger the international coalition backing the military regime, the lower the appearance that Southern Europe is controlling the conflict unilaterally.

This has been a consistently difficult task. At most, other European states have given lukewarm support to Southern European policies. As a *Le Monde* article stated in 1995, "France, alongside Spain, Portugal, and Italy, is contributing a Mediterranean sensibility which is lacking in its Northern European allies."<sup>114</sup> The European states

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<sup>113</sup> "Efforts Made to Tighten Up Ties with Algeria", *Le Monde*, (December 21, 1995) p. 11.

<sup>114</sup> "Efforts to Promote NATO Southern Expansion Viewed", *Le Monde*, (February 27, 1995) p. 13.

without Algeria on their periphery did not treat it as a significant problem. Chaos in Bosnia and the economic development of Eastern Europe were more important. Furthermore, the expanded power of the European Union complicated the Southern European states' ability to influence their neighbors.

The structural changes brought about by the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty altered intra-European relations considerably. The Maastricht Treaty greatly enhanced the power of the European Presidency to determine common foreign policy. Furthermore, the Presidency would revolve amongst member states every six months. Whichever state held the Presidency had a great deal of control in determining Europe's international agenda during that period. When Southern European states held power, political and economic issues dealing with the Maghreb became important. When Central or Northern European states were in charge, the focus was more likely to be Eastern Europe.

The reluctance of other regional actors to become entangled has not been the most pressing problem for Southern Europe. There is enough cross-linkage within the framework of the European Union to ensure that a neighboring state's failure to support the Southern European approach does not translate into an independent policy. The British have been openly reluctant to participate in some of the refinancing efforts, but have continued to support French policies. As British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd noted, "In [the] Maastricht [Treaty] France and Great Britain refused to subordinate their foreign policies to a community structure or majority voting system but that does not prevent us from working with our partners . . . the Europe of nations must work together



closely.”<sup>115</sup> Instead, the problem has been preventing the United States from more than a participatory role in the economic and political solutions to the Algerian crisis.

### 3. Europe as a Co-Belligerent

In light of the economic, military, and political assistance given to the military regime by European states, there is little wonder that these nations came to be perceived as co-belligerents. Arguments such as, “the military regime that usurped Algeria’s first free elections must be given a chance or there will be no hope for democracy, economic development, and continued French influence,” made it clear that Europe would be unwilling to accept a compromise based on the merits of the Islamic movement.<sup>116</sup> Since European states behaved as co-belligerents, targeting their business interests within Algeria was a logical step for the Islamic militants. The first warning of impending action came in October 1993, when the radical Armed Islamic Group (GIA) announced that any foreigner within Algeria’s borders after December 1, 1993 would be slain.<sup>117</sup> To date, more than 100 foreigners, mostly French, have been killed. When these measures proved

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<sup>115</sup> “United Kingdom Urges Cooperation with French”, *Le Figaro*, (March 16, 1995) p. 4. Economics has played an important role in maintaining these close political arrangements. To force the United Kingdom to limit the freedoms of Islamic groups suspected of involvement in the Paris subway bombings, France linked the issue to British-French trade. Interestingly, the week after British announced new restrictions on foreign national’s political activities, Algeria announced a 30 year contract with British Petroleum for the exploitation of a natural gas field valued at \$3 billion. “Sonatrach, BP Sign \$3 Billion Gas Contract.” Radio Algiers. FBIS-NES-95-248. 23 December 1995.

<sup>116</sup> Matthew Connelly. “Deja Vu All Over Again: Algeria, France and Us” *The National Interest*. (Winter 1995/96) p. 30.

<sup>117</sup> Alfred Hermida. “Killing Foreigners.” *Middle East International*. (December 17, 1993) p. 11.



ineffective, militants began direct targeting of the military regime's European supporters. Actions such as the summer 1995 Paris subway bombings help to highlight the growing animosity toward European interference amongst the radical Islamic elements.

However, the enmity of the GIA was not responsible for Europe's eventual policy change with regard to the military regime. Instead, it was the United States' attempt to involve itself in the political dialogue. Low level talks between American diplomats and the FIS led Europe to call for open elections in Algeria. American involvement posed a direct threat to the hegemonic sphere Europe held over Algeria. This was readily attested to during the French presidential elections, when both candidates agreed that American involvement meant that the United States would, "stick France with the 'Great Satan' label by courting Islamists and maneuvering so that Paris appear[ed] to be the only support for the military junta in Algiers."<sup>118</sup> Since an Islamic government remained unacceptable, the Southern European nations needed to find a plan that prevented the FIS from gaining power, but increased the legitimacy of the Algerian political system. If they could not find an acceptable solution, they truly faced the possibility of becoming irrelevant. The West was willing to support Southern European interests, but every endeavor has its limits. If France was unable to settle the conflict, then other interested parties would attempt to negotiate a solution independently.

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<sup>118</sup> "Presidential Candidates Warn of U.S. Challenge", *Le Monde*, (March 22, 1995) p. 9.

## **V. SOCIETAL-BASED EQUILIBRATION: SAN 'EGIDIO AND THE NATIONAL PACT**

In most examinations of Algeria's stalled transition, analysts have focused upon the actions of the military regime and the Islamic militants, to the detriment of those factions of civil society that reject the extremism of both camps. This is unfortunate, for while civil organizations are not party to the military conflict, they are essential to the creation of a political solution. Indeed, the desire to garner support from civil society has made it the focal point of conflict for both the military and the Islamists. While both sides have vacillated between policies that repressed or attempted to co-opt civil society, neither has lost sight of its importance.

While both military and Islamic zealots have been able to garner some support from societal organizations, neither has been able to impose a political settlement. While this has partially resulted from the military strength of both sets of combatants, it also is a result of civil society's unwillingness to accept anything less than the political liberalization promised by President Benjedid during the first round of democratization.

Both sets of combatants realize that civil society is the linchpin to solving the Algerian political crisis. Whichever side is able to gain the trust of populace and the nongovernmental elites will have the strength to resist the military pressures of the other. However, in the five years between the canceled 1991 parliamentary elections and the 1996 presidential elections, neither side was able to accomplish this goal. The Algerian people have remained 'uncaptured' by either the Islamists or the military because the vast majority of civil society refuses to accept the authoritarian systems proposed by the

military and the Islamic radicals. Faced with extremism on both sides, the non-governmental elites have attempted to maintain their own extremely diverse coalition, working toward the installation of democracy.

In January 1995, civil society produced its own plan for equilibration when the secular political opposition negotiated the platform of Rome with the FIS. Although the government has since outflanked civil society's efforts, the Rome conference is still relevant to the Algerian crisis. In light of the flaws in the government's plan, the Platform of Rome still offers the best chance for resolution of the Algerian conflict.

#### **A. THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY**

When interim president Mohammed Boudiaf was assassinated in June 1992, whatever chance the government had to capture civil society died with him. Although Boudiaf came to power via the military, he was acceptable to civil society. In fact, one of his first proposals was a government of national reconciliation that would allow political organization that rejected violence to participate. He was willing to reach out not only to the secular political parties, but to the moderates within the FIS who had been denied their electoral legitimacy. With his death, the government no longer contained any personalities capable of reaching out to civil society with any credibility. Although there were certainly moderates within the military-sponsored government that succeeded Boudiaf, they could not guarantee that their viewpoint would be carried by the entire institution, and thus could not be trusted.

## 1. Civil Proponents

However the attempts by both the Islamic extremists and the military government to co-opt or suppress civil society did not lead to the complete demise of independent political thought. Although the secular opposition was marginalized, its leaders were still highly respected, and could not be thrown in jail for arbitrary reasons like the leaders of the FIS. As such, although their mobilization capacities were limited, these groups were able to maintain not only their domestic support, but access to Western governments.

These individuals refused to compromise their positions to ease the troubles of the state. In addition to preventing the FIS from taking power, the military coup also prevented the secular opposition from assuming national office for the first time in their history. Thus, while some of the Islamic rhetoric threatened democracy, the military had already shown that it would not accept its meaning. Furthermore, as demonstrated by the joint opposition to the FLN's parliamentary district gerrymandering, the secular political parties already knew that it was possible to work with the FIS. Its leaders were much more willing to compromise than the military. Thus, "Several parties and associations believed that democracy could be constructed only on the foundation of a negotiated settlement."<sup>119</sup> To end the conflict, civil society would have to create a pact that accommodated the moderates on both sides of the conflict. If the pact captured a large enough percentage of the Algerian population, then the extremists would be isolated both militarily and politically. With common ground discovered, and appropriate rules

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<sup>119</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers, and Democrats: The Second Algerian War." p.29.



established, Algeria could then move forward toward solving the economic and social ills that plagued the state.

## **2. Key Societal Organizations**

Before civil society could influence the outcome of the conflict, it had to discover what common ground existed amongst its members. The myriad of political parties, the diversity of opinions, and general disorganization prevented the emergence of a coherent dialogue for the first four years of the conflict. In the 1991 election, no secular party came close to reaching the number of popular votes for the FIS. Parties were organized around regional identities or minor issues that were unable to build mass followings. To match the strength and organizational power of the military and the Islamists, the political opposition had to find common causes and principles around which they could unite. In this respect, an introduction to the main proponents of the civil pact is in order.

### ***a. The FLN as an Opposition Party***

At first glance the FLN would seem to be a poor candidate for Algeria's political opposition. Since it was the party of the old regime, it could not lay claim to any democratic heritage. Its thirty year rule of Algeria, and domination of the flawed transition were responsible for the social conditions and the subsequent coup that led the people to overwhelmingly support the FIS. Furthermore, its leader Abd al-Hamid Mihri was a stalwart member of the old guard, closely associated with the bureaucratic author-

itarianism of former president Houari Boumedienne. The result was that the party's, "policies and personnel were suspect to a large number of Algerians."<sup>120</sup>

However, even though there was the appearance of continuation atop the FLN's organizational structure, real change had occurred amongst the rank and file. President Chadli Benjedid's political reforms had weakened the party's bureaucratic wing by reducing government subsidization and party infrastructure. Further political maneuvering had led to the military's withdrawal from the party. The end result was that the iron triangle of party-bureaucracy-military had been reduced to an organization of politicians and reformers. As such, it was hard for the FLN to accept a détente with the military following the coup. Benjedid's reforms had been designed to give the FLN's political wing increased power to influence Algeria's future. Accepting a subordinate position to the army would have been the antithesis of this goal.

Additionally, by negating the election, the military denied the FLN whatever electoral legitimacy it had won. The FLN's gerrymandering may have led to the loss of many parliamentary districts, but it still received almost 25% of the popular vote in the 1991 elections.<sup>121</sup> As a result, whatever its faults in the eyes of many Algerians, the FLN remained the second political party in numbers. With the destruction of the iron triangle, and the loss of their own electoral legitimacy, the politicians of the FLN

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

condemned the military's dissolution of the political process. From the day of the coup the party began to perceive itself as an opposition movement.

*b. The Socialist Forces Front and Regional Identity*

While the FLN was suspect in the minds of the general populace, there was no question as to the credibility of the Socialist Forces Front (FFS). However, this movement's organizational identity gave it wider name recognition internationally than domestically. The party was founded at independence by Husayn Ayat Ahmad, a leader of the Algerian revolution who opposed the autocratic tendencies of the FLN's leadership. Although it was officially banned, the party survived the three decades of the FLN's hegemonic rule. Unfortunately, the factors that enabled the party to survive the FLN's hegemony prevented it from building a mass following when Algeria began to liberalize its political system.

The FFS was able to survive the FLN's autocratic rule because of its strong regional and ethnic affiliations. "Although never a separatist party, [the FFS] had an ethnic/regional base in Kabylie, a mountainous region east of Algiers, and among Kabyles (Berbers) elsewhere."<sup>122</sup> Thus, while the movement's cultural affiliation amongst ethnic Berbers allowed it to survive the single party state, it did not provide a wide enough base of support for democratic competition. Indeed, the party's strong showing during the 1991 election resulted more from the FLN's gerrymandering than from the FFS's widespread appeal. The FFS placed second to the FIS, winning a total of 25 seats, but

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

received barely 500,000 votes.<sup>123</sup> By way of contrast, the FLN received more than 1,500,000 votes.<sup>124</sup>

The FFS's inability to transition from a regional organization to a national political party is regrettable. Although the party is formed around the concept of intellectual and cultural rights for Algeria's Berber population, it has had, "a long-standing stance in favor of pluralist democracy."<sup>125</sup> It opposed the extremism of the FIS, but was equally opposed to the cancellation of the election. Throughout the civil war, the FFS would provide the political center for civil society as it attempted to forge its own solution independent of the excesses of the military and the Islamists.

*c. An Independent Media?*

The military's view of security was such that it wanted to control nearly every aspect of the media, despite the fact that, "a significant proportion of the press was also firmly Islamist."<sup>126</sup> The result has not only been the stifling of Islamic views, but of those of the secular opposition as well. Media restrictions began shortly after the coup, and continue to this day due to a 1993 law that allows authorities to, "ban newspapers with reports that threaten national security and public order."<sup>127</sup> The May 7, 1996

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> British Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Algeria Since Independence." [<http://www.fco.gov.uk/reference/briefs/algeria.html>]

<sup>125</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers, and Democrats: The Second Algerian War." p. 29.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> "Algeria OSAC Country Security Report", [<http://www.owens.com/tradescp/ci/cia04.txt>.]



seizure of the Algerian daily *El Watan* is an excellent example. The newspaper was confiscated for reporting a gunbattle between the military and the GIA in a suburb of Algeria. Since the government did not want the battle publicized, it did not issue a press release, and thus the supposedly independent press was not authorized to report on the clash. The ability to control the media is greatly enhanced by government monopolies on the means of production. The government owns all 16 printing presses within Algeria.<sup>128</sup>

Media control has hindered the efforts of independent political actors to present their proposals to society or to appreciate the true extent of the divisions amongst state elites. From the other side, the GIA's propensity to target any journalist also aids self-censorship. Thus, when civil organizations spoke for the restoration of the democratic process, and voiced their opposition to the atrocities of the Islamists and the military, they found themselves targeted by both. As Salima Ghezali, the female managing editor of the Algerian daily *La Nation* noted:

If there is a clash, if someone is murdered, we cannot do our own investigation; we cannot send reporters, we cannot ask witnesses to tell us what they have seen. If one does, the newspaper is suspended for between 40 days and 6 months, you never know the length of the ban you are risking. Any information concerning security matters must come from the official government news agency. We can only reprint official communiqués.<sup>129</sup>

Limiting the independence of these key actors may be a useful way for the state to control the flow of information, but it does little to capture the society's trust. The radical Islamists erred by attacking secular elites. The state fared worse by creating a

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Chris Kutschera. "A Lonely and Deadly Game." *The Middle East*, (July 1995) p. 35.

climate of fear and distrust. The failure to capture civil society meant that neither side was able to declare victory.

## **B. THE PLATFORM OF ROME**

The inability of either side to crush the independence of secular political actors provided the opportunity for the best chance at political reconciliation. After more than three years of conflict, the situation was deteriorating toward a mutually hurting stalemate. As Rebah Kebir, the FIS's European representative noted in January 1995, "Neither the Army nor the Islamic opposition is capable of obtaining a military victory today."<sup>130</sup> The conflict could only be resolved through a settlement that allowed the competing groups a stake in the process, and the right to participate. A framework making this basic requirements emerged in November 1994, when the main dissent groups met in Rome.

### **1. The Role of San 'Egidio**

At this point in the conflict, talks between the military and the FIS's imprisoned leadership had broken off. The military refused to release the party's leaders until societal violence had ceased, while the FIS leadership refused to call for an end to political violence until their rights to participate in the political process had been restored. As a result, the regime's vaunted plan for national dialogue was an abject failure. Since the FIS was unable to participate, the secular opposition refused to attend. They realized any settlement that excluded the FIS would be useless. However, the opening offered by the

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<sup>130</sup> FBIS-NES-95-014 "FIS Leadership on Foreign Support, Rome Accord." *Radio France International* (January 21, 1995)

military gave civil society's members the opportunity to explore what commonalties existed amongst their organizations. Thus when the Catholic community of San 'Egidio offered its services toward mediation of the conflict, a number of political parties accepted.

San 'Egidio is a religious fellowship with a long history of conflict mediation. Amongst its past successes was the negotiation of the end to the Mozambican civil war in 1992. Thus it brought a record of impartiality and credibility to negotiations. By serving as an honest broker, San 'Egidio could help break down the walls of distrust and suspicion that had previously kept the opposition from cooperating.

## **2. Preliminary Talks**

The first round of talks were held in Rome in late November 1994. Amongst the participants were Husayn Ayat Ahmad of the FFS, Abd al-Hamid Mihri of the FLN, Ben Bella of the Movement for Democracy in Algeria, and Anwar Haddam of the FIS. Thus, the "Colloquium for Algeria" represented more than 85% of the popular electorate of the canceled 1991 elections.<sup>131</sup> Whatever framework the talks produced could not be ignored by the government or the international community. At the conference's conclusion, the participants released a statement agreeing to four broad principles: 1) the rejection of violence as a medium of conflict resolution, 2) support for democracy, 3)

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<sup>131</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers, and Democrats: The Second Algerian War." p.33.

open competitive elections, and 4) respect for human rights.<sup>132</sup> A second round of talks were scheduled for January 1995.

The second round of negotiations was necessary so party leaders could return and consult with their members prior to any actual commitment. In the case of the FIS, the matter was further complicated by the imprisonment of the party's top leadership. However, Robert Mortimer asserts that Abd al-Hamid Mihri, the secretary general of the FLN, was allowed to visit both Madden and Benhadj, and was able to bring a letter delineating their positions.<sup>133</sup> The FIS's commitment to dialogue is most noted by Benhadj's changed stance on democracy. Mihri was apparently, "stupefied by the political evolution of a man like Benhadj whose position had become much more pragmatic in the face of the threat of the GIA."<sup>134</sup>

Indeed, convincing the rest of the world that it was committed to democracy appears to have been the FIS's primary goal in the second Rome conference. Since the military coup, the party had been described as the medium through which Algeria would be transformed into a second Iran. If the Islamic movement was to have any chance of success, it had to find a way to gain access to Western governments in spite of the terrorist acts of the GIA. As Mortimer notes:

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid, p. 35.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

<sup>134</sup> Jean-Paul Mari. "Rome le Labyrinthe de la paix." *Le Nouvel Observateur* (19-25 January 1995) quoted in Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers, and Democrats: The Second Algerian War." p. 36.



The real task of the San 'Egidio was to demonstrate that the FIS was ready to commit itself to respect the basic freedoms of a democratic society. The premise of the Rome conferees was that if this were obtained, the government then ought to be prepared to lift the ban on the Islamist party, which in turn would enable to call for an end to the violence.<sup>135</sup>

Thus, the conference would need to enhance the FIS's domestic legitimacy, and install some international legitimacy. It had to convince the government to negotiate with the FIS, and persuade the international community that the FIS would accept a democratic framework. The only way to accomplish this goal was for the movement to commit itself to a common set of rules negotiated with the secular opposition.

### **3. A National Pact**

The second round of talks took the commonalities discovered at the first round and transformed them into a tangible political framework. The result was the Platform of Rome. The Platform was a six part document announcing the shared values and principles of Algeria's political opposition. Chief amongst its objectives was, "the rejection of violence as a means of gaining or retaining power."<sup>136</sup> Thus the platform, "implicitly condemned both the armed Islamists and the governing authorities while placing the political parties on the high ground of non-violence."<sup>137</sup> The FIS's rejection of violence as a means of obtaining power is extremely significant. In the past, the movement's leaders refused to call off the Jihad until Islamists had the right to participate in Algerian

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<sup>135</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers, and Democrats: The Second Algerian War." p. 35.

<sup>136</sup> Le Monde Diplomatique. "La plate-forme de Rome." [<http://web.ina.fr/CP/MondeDiplo/1995/03/A/1329.html>]

<sup>137</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers, and Democrats: The Second Algerian War." p. 36.

politics unfettered. This marked the first separation between the political moderates of the FIS and the militants of the GIA. Instead of attempting to cover the excesses committed in the name of Islam, the FIS acknowledged that it had more in common with the secular opposition than the militants that were threatening state and society. Earlier differences with the FFS were repaired the recognition of the cultural rights of the Berbers.<sup>138</sup>

Through their actions, the FIS displayed its willingness to accepting civil society over the Islamic militants. The movement showed that if it achieved power, it was likely to abide by the mutually agreed upon political processes, respecting the pact's second plank that called upon the signatories to, "respect a multi-party system and alternation in power."<sup>139</sup>

### C. LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS

On its merits, the Platform of Rome seemed to be an excellent medium for ending the conflict. By providing a framework that called for the respect of individuals and political organizations to participate, the national pact was one that attempted to, "move the polity toward democracy by democratic means."<sup>140</sup> Such an arrangement results when, "No social or political group is sufficiently dominant to impose its 'ideal project' and what emerges is a second-best solution which none of the actors wanted, but which all of them can agree to and share in."<sup>141</sup> Since its signatories represented a wide diversity of

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<sup>138</sup> Le Monde Diplomatique. "La plate-forme de Rome."

<sup>139</sup> Le Monde Diplomatique. "La plate-forme de Rome."

<sup>140</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter. "Negotiating Pacts" *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, Prospects for Democracy*. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) p. 38.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, p 39.

political views from parties accounting for more than 85 percent of the 1991 electoral votes, it carried a great deal of legitimacy.<sup>142</sup> Thus its enactment would have frozen out the extremists on both sides of the conflict. The politicians would have successfully wrested control from the militants. In fact, with political accord, the militants would have lost the basis for their actions. Society was willing to support actors like the GIA because the politicians of the FIS were unable to achieve any tangible results. Had the pact been enacted, the disloyal opposition would have had little choice but to acquiesce or face a united polity hostile to their acts.

Unfortunately however, the signatories of the national pact did not control the conflict. While the deal brought political Islam and civil society closer, the military resisted what it called, “an unwelcome intrusion into a domestic security concern.” If civil society was to resolve the conflict, it would have to do more than negate the disloyal opposition; it would have to persuade the government to accept the concept of a national pact. Since the Platform of Rome called for the acceptance of the FIS as a political movement, and the removal of the army from politics, it was unlikely that the regime would simply acquiesce. Civil society would have to pressure the government to alter its stance. Thus, the opposition began to carry its united message to the international community. A drop in European support would send a clear signal to the military that it would not be able to dictate Algeria’s future in light of civil society’s efforts.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

## 1. International Reaction

For a brief period, it appeared that the Platform of Rome would actually have a chance. The FIS's rapprochement with the secular opposition 'rehabilitated' the movement internationally. Nations such as the United States that had previously refused to participate began to hold low level talks with the Islamists. As a result of these openings, even more promising statements came from the FIS. At the urging of the United States, the FIS's parliamentary mission abroad released a statement that openly condemned all acts of violence directed at civilians - a clear attempt to distance the political FIS from the militant GIA.<sup>143</sup>

With regard to Europe however, the movement was unable to persuade the relevant actors to significantly alter their stance. While distant states such as England and Germany were willing to accept an arrangement brokered by civil society, Algeria was a peripheral concern and like the United States, they would defer to the foreign policy goals of their Southern European allies directly affected by the crisis. If international pressure was to be brought to bear upon the Algerian government, the opposition would have to commit France to significantly alter its assessment. This never happened. While France praised the concept of a national pact, it did not significantly alter its economic or political assistance. In light of the unaltered French policy, the remainder of the international community was willing to give the regime a chance to prove itself. Thus, when the army

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<sup>143</sup> FBIS-NES-95-056. "Opposition Pressures Zeroual on FIS Declaration." *Al-Sharq Al-Aswat*. (March 20, 1995)



announced its own election plan, Europe was quick to announce the restoration of governmental legitimacy no matter how superior the Platform of Rome.

## **2. Domestic Reaction**

Europe's willingness to support whatever military plan emerged was enhanced by the poor reception the Platform of Rome received domestically. While the populace embraced the plan, the radical Islamists of the GIA announced through a new series of bombings that they would not accept marginalization. If the military would not abide by the rules, then their groups would not be bound by civil society either.

This was unfortunate, because in the immediate aftermath of the conference there were preliminary indications that significant factions of the GIA might support the political ascendancy of the FIS. In a communiqué released a week after the Rome conference the GIA announced that it was ready to, "stop the war if the regime agrees to the opposition demands reached in Rome."<sup>144</sup> When however, the military indicated that it had no intention of using the national pact as a framework for negotiations, the radicals quickly reversed their position, stressing "its objective to establish a caliphate through armed struggle."<sup>145</sup> This was soon followed by the resumption of the GIA's aggressive bombing campaign. The result was a series of car bombs throughout Algiers at a time when

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<sup>144</sup> JPRS-TOT-95-003-L. "Armed Islamic Group Says Ready to Stop War." *Paris AFP*. (January 15, 1996)

<sup>145</sup> JPRS-TOT-95-003L. "Armed Islamic Groups Reject Rome Accord." *Paris Radio France International*. (January 21, 1996)

international attention was focused upon Algeria, including one toward the end of January 1995 that killed 42 people and wounded 286.<sup>146</sup>

These actions were aimed as much against the FIS as they were against the government and the general populace. Despite the government's rejection of the national pact, the FIS was willing to stay within the confines of the Platform of Rome, applying political instead of military pressure. In the GIA's view, this decision compromised the moderate Islamists. Attempting to cooperate with the secular opposition only demonstrated how far from the path the politicians of the FIS had strayed. Soon after the GIA began to target known FIS supporters in Algeria, and the party's representatives abroad. The radicals even threatened the family of Abassi Madani - an action never proposed by the government. Furthermore, it was following the joining of the FIS to the secular opposition that the GIA began to plan more aggressive acts of resistance such as the Air France hijacking and the Paris subway bombings.

Ironically, the rejection of the pact by extremists on both sides of the issue had the effect of making them unwitting allies. The GIA was able to use the government's rejection of the national pact as the rationale for its attempt to wrest control of the Islamic movement from the FIS. Meanwhile, the GIA's renewed campaign of violence allowed the military to persuade its European backers that there was no difference between the political FIS and the radical GIA. Both groups benefited from the other's insurgence at the expense of the secular opposition, the FIS and the common people of Algeria.

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<sup>146</sup> Algeria OSAC Country Security Report.

### **3. The Demise of Civility**

The escalation of political violence had the effect of once again marginalizing civil society. Although Algeria's secular opposition announced that the FIS was trustworthy and must be included in any political dialogue, civil society was unable to persuade the international community to significantly alter its assessment. Despite political Islam's stated rejection of violence as means to attain power, and its commitment to working within a democratic framework, the GIA's campaign of terror gave the government the opportunity to discredit the FIS internationally. Acts such as the murder of foreign nationals in Algeria and the GIA's Paris subway bombings shed a bad light on Islam in Algeria no matter what its nature. Thus, when the government proposed a plan in response to the Platform of Rome, its international sponsors were more than willing to give it a chance.

## **VI. MILITARY EQUILIBRATION**

The military has always been a key player in Algerian politics. From the equilibration of the Algerian political system in 1962 to the coup against Benjedid in 1990, the institution has not hesitated to intervene when its interests have been threatened. Yet, traditionally, these conflicts have been confined to competition between the army and other factions within the FLN. This chapter will show the difficulties the army faces in attempting to deal with societal-based conflict, and why its plan for political equilibration is likely to fail.

### **A. MILITARY BEHAVIOR 1991-1995**

While the military has always been a dominant actor, it has sought to avoid the travails and institutional cost of politics. Instead, it has “preferred the shade to the light, operating behind a veil of civilian leaders and institutions.”<sup>147</sup> When the FLN ruled Algeria, the army’s dual role of party faction and military institution served it quite well. By serving as the swing vote between the political and bureaucratic wings, the military could exert considerable influence over both, while extracting maximum political autonomy. The fact that every President since Ben Bella has emerged from the military’s top leadership is far from insignificant. The institutional power of the military has prevented any effective civilian control on military behavior. The Minister of Defense was traditionally a serving military officer, and the position moved institutional demands upward instead of asserting civilian control downward. This autonomy allowed the army

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<sup>147</sup> Mortimer, “Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algerian War”, p. 20.



to generate interests in areas that had little to do with military strategy, but much to do with personal enrichment. As members of the state's elite, officers had their own import licenses, and could bypass the centralized distribution networks, receiving tidy commissions on state-issued contracts.<sup>148</sup>

### **1. Institutional Organization**

Maintaining autonomy has traditionally been the military's most important goal. As such, the military was always careful to arrange an institutional consensus before it interacted with the other wings of the FLN. Since it had to maneuver between the other two wings of the party, the army could not afford to leave any gaps that could be exploited. Instead of suffering the loss of prestige that came with the public bickering of other party factions, the military would hash out its differences in private. As French political scientist Remy Leveau noted, the army was, "One of Algeria's rare, relatively democratic institutions and it function[ed] by consensus."<sup>149</sup> However, unlike politicians, institutional loyalty amongst military officers was more important than political independence. When the leadership had negotiated a proper course of action, the rank and file, including those who were not completely satisfied with the result, would support the policy. The clearest example of this was the complete resignation of the military's membership from the FLN in 1990 due to dissatisfaction with President Benjedid's

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid, p. 20.

<sup>149</sup> Remy Leveau, "FIS: The Army Wants to Negotiate", *Le Nouvel Observateur* no. 3 (February 1994) quoted in Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algerian War," p. 20.

maneuvering.<sup>150</sup> Although these delegates held their positions on the basis of party affiliation, their loyalty to the military as an institution was stronger.

Military maneuvering following the 1991 coup inadvertently damaged this institutional loyalty. Since the bureaucratic wing was already negated by Benjedid's reforms, the removal of the political wing left the military without an effective opposition within the party structure. When interim President Mohammed Boudiaf was subsequently assassinated, the last incentive for military unity died with him. The few civilians on the High State Council (HCE) were firmly under military control. The state would remain under the army's rule until in the HCE's words, "The necessary conditions are achieved for the normal functioning of the state."<sup>151</sup> Since the army unilaterally controlled policy, the need to establish institutional consensus amongst the rank and file diminished. There were no coalitions within the FLN threatening the army's autonomy. As a result, while the military leadership agreed that the Islamists were a threat to Algeria and the institution's privileged place in society, there was a wide range of viewpoints on how to neutralize them.

The situation was exacerbated by political maneuvering amongst the military's leadership. One of the coup's key ringleaders, General Khalid Nazir was in poor health and in danger of becoming irrelevant in the military's decision-making process. As a

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<sup>150</sup> Mortimer, "Algeria: The Clash between Islam, Democracy and the Military", p. 42.

<sup>151</sup> Azzedine Layachi and Abdel-kader Haireche, "National Development and Political Protest: Islamists in the Maghreb Countries", *Arab Studies Quarterly* (Spring/Summer 1992) p. 80.

result, while he was still dominant, Nazir engineered the appointment of opposing camps to the state's most influential positions. Retired General Liamine Zeroual was appointed Minister of Defense, while General Mohammed Lamari was promoted to military Chief of Staff.<sup>152</sup> As Mortimer noted, "By maintaining a balance between opinions within the top military leadership he [Nazir] maintained his own role as the ultimate arbitrator."<sup>153</sup>

## **2. Eradicators and Conciliators**

The factions that Lamari and Zeroual represented can be broadly grouped as eradicators and conciliators. The former favored a strategy of brutal suppression as the only way of dealing with the Islamic threat, while the latter argued that the only way to save the state from complete collapse was negotiation. In this, the two factions mirror Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter's description of hard-liners and soft-liners quite well:

The main core of the hard-liners is formed by those who reject the 'cancers' and 'disorders' of democracy and believe they have a mission to eliminate all traces of such pathologies from political life. . . This nucleus of unconditional authoritarians is likely to remain the stubborn source of attempted coups and conspiracies. . . Soft-liners [are created] through their increasing awareness that the regime . . . will have to make use in the foreseeable future some degree or form of electoral legitimacy.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>153</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algerian War", p. 29.

<sup>154</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter. "Opening Authoritarian Regimes." *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, Prospects for Democracy*. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) p. 37.

Thus, hard-liners and soft-liners can be two sides of the same coin. Hard-liners feel that the cost of democratization is higher than the benefits to be received, while soft-liners focus on the cost of repression. In fact, there is no guarantee that soft-liners are in fact latent democrats. The differences between the factions might actually be tactical - both groups sharing the same goal of preserving the preeminent status of the military while disagreeing upon the methods through which it is to be achieved.

In Algeria's case, the difference between the factions may result from their origins. As Hugh Roberts noted, "The main adherents of the eradicators have been those officers who served in the French army. . . . and the French educated wing of the political class."<sup>155</sup> Thus, the eradicators are Francophone and elite oriented. Meanwhile, the conciliators are generally more Arabist. By way of example, General Lamari is a former French army officer while General Zeroual's military career began with the revolutionaries of the FLN.<sup>156</sup>

Thus there are clear cultural differences between the two groups. However, while there were heated disagreements over policy decisions, the military's professionalism and loyalty ensured the institution's cohesiveness. The military would continue to observe a single command structure although the divisions at the top hampered policy enactment. Military behavior toward the Islamists and secular civil society was often inconsistent and confusing.

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<sup>155</sup> Roberts, "Algeria between Eradicators and Conciliators", p. 26.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.



*a. Policy Enactment*

When eradicators were dominant, the HCE placed a much greater emphasis on security concerns than on confidence building. Indeed, at times the treatment given to civil society was nearly as bad as that displayed toward the Islamists. An excellent example of eradicator policy would be the HCE's behavior in 1992. Declaring that "democracy requires a strong and stable state," the government ordered the temporary cessation of all but state owned newspapers and suppressed the remaining legal political movements. In seeking to build societal stability, the state drove away society. The eradicator rationale was that problems requiring military interaction with civil society were secondary to the Islamic menace. Deciding what role civil organizations would play in Algeria's future would have to wait until the military conflict was resolved.

Meanwhile, when the conciliators made policy, the government reversed course and courted civil society through a series of national dialogues. However, the continual vacillation made the secular opposition extremely distrustful of the government. Even if military conciliators were sincere in their desire to reach an accord with civil society, the institution's power sharing was such that there was no guarantee that an agreement would be kept. The prime example of this predicament was the abject failure of the government's 1994 national conference.

When these talks were held, the conciliators had two major factors working in their favor. First, as one of its last policy decisions, the inept HCE appointed Liamine Zeroual as Algeria's interim president. Secondly, Algeria's ongoing financial crisis gave

the conciliators needed leverage over the eradicators. Key European lenders were increasingly disillusioned with the Algeria's inability to solve the crisis militarily.<sup>157</sup> At the time, Algeria was negotiating a \$1 billion loan from the IMF, and attempting to restructure more than \$12 billion in debt via the Paris Club of government creditors.<sup>158</sup> Providing the appearance that the government was open to a political settlement proved to be most useful in securing the financial assistance.

The conciliator's proposal called upon representatives of the government, legal political parties and societal elites to set aside differences and negotiate an end to the war. Significantly the military promised to send officers that would represent the military as an institution. In effect, this act was an attempt to drop the facade of civilian rule and allow the populace directly negotiate with military policy makers. Furthermore, in an effort designed more to satisfy civil society than its own needs, the government extended a narrow offer to the FIS. The conference would be open to the participation of, "Personalities . . . that were respectful of the law . . . and represented not the banned party, but the current of opinion associated with the FIS."<sup>159</sup> In response, the FIS's European representatives called for the unconditional release of Madani and Benhadj as a precondition to any participation.

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<sup>157</sup> FBIS-NES-95-014 "EU Governments Rethinking Support", *The Guardian* (January 21, 1995) p. 11.

<sup>158</sup> "Balancing Growth with Development", *Project Trade and Finance*, (September, 1994) p. A 3.

<sup>159</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algerian War", p. 32.

Zeroual ordered Madani and Benhadj moved from prison to house arrest in February 1994, and began a series of secret negotiations with them. According to Mortimer, the government offered to completely release the pair if they would, “renounce the ongoing political violence and declare respect for a secular form of government with alteration of power.”<sup>160</sup> While the second demand might have been negotiable in the context of the national conference, the first was not open for discussion. Calling for an end to Islamic violence was putting the cart before the horse; before the jihad ceased, the military would have to recognize the FIS as a legitimate political movement, and allow it to unconditionally participate in the national dialogue. To do otherwise would only diminish the politician’s legitimacy in the eyes of their followers. Thus, Madani and Benhadj rejected the government’s proposal. As Benhadj responded in a letter to Zeroual:

We support the search for a legitimate and just solution that restores rights . . . but not in the way advocated by the military junta. . . We refuse to hold discussions in the dark. . . and favor doing so on television screens. We believe that a solution that does not [address] the roots of the crisis can only complicate matters. . . What you falsely call terrorism is jihad for the sake of God, and Moslems unsheathe the sword only when all avenues of peaceful legitimate change have been blocked.<sup>161</sup>

The government’s inability to compromise with the FIS made the concept of a national conference pointless. When it finally convened in January 1994, it only showed how isolated the military had become. As *The Economist* noted, “All the main political groups, including the FLN . . . saw the affair as a military face-saver and stayed

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> “FIS Leader Challenges Algerian President to Step Down or Accept Arbitration or Televised Debate”, [<http://link.lanic.utexas.edu/menic/..se/oilcourse/mail/algeria/0013.html>]

away.”<sup>162</sup> Mainstream parties such as the FLN and the FFS had no real affinity with the FIS, but they realized that any settlement achieved without its participation was meaningless. Stability could not be achieved through the exclusion of a sector as large as the one from which the Islamists drew their support. When these attempts at dialogue were rejected, the conciliators were discredited and the eradicators once again gained the upper hand.

Despite the conference’s failure, strong French support allowed the government to win its IMF loan, and successfully resolve its Paris Club negotiations. With the economic situation improved, the conciliator’s failure to resolve the problem via negotiations strengthened the hand of the eradicators. Within a matter of months, the government declared that the Islamists were irremediable and returned Benhadj and Madani to prison. Zeroual then loosened military restrictions, giving Lamari the freedom to pursue his strategy to the utmost.

#### ***b. Military Efforts***

The eradicator’s military plan called for a two pronged approach. The army had to reduce the militants’ ability to operate in the city, while interdicting their supply lines and safe areas in the countryside. Tactical responses were driven by the evolving nature of the Islamic threat. While the armed groups had been limited to assassinations and drive-by shootings in 1992, by 1994 they were capable of advanced bombings. According to official figures, in 1994 there were 2725 separate acts of

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<sup>162</sup> “Time to Turn Back”, *The Economist*, (January 29, 1994) p. 16.



sabotage and destruction in Algeria at a cost of \$2 billion.<sup>163</sup> There was little question as to the effectiveness of the armed groups. The high cost of Islamic violence in the cities meant the government would need to separate the active combatants from the suppliers. If Islamic combatants were forced to fall back on their previous tactics, they would be easier to identify, and cause far less damage. Single gunmen are much easier to deal with than car bombs with delayed fuses.

Ironically, the army's tactical employment of this strategy bears a strong resemblance to the French military's plan against the FLN. The government would prevent Islamic movement in the cities through the use of internal checkpoints, personal papers, and strict enforcement of curfews. Those areas of major cities that were known strong points of Islamic support were subject to frequent searches and military patrols. In the countryside, the army and air force conduct frequent patrols of the state's main transit corridors, and strictly control interregional movement. When suspected safe areas are discovered, the military response is swift and sharp. Although the ground forces are dominant, Algeria has frequently relied upon helicopters for forward reconnaissance, and air strikes utilizing napalm amongst other weapons. On occasion, military activity has meant the violation of neighboring country's sovereignty. However, these acts apparently have the tacit approval of Tunisia and Morocco.<sup>164</sup> Since there are Islamic opposition

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<sup>163</sup> "Algeria OSAC Country Security Report", [<http://www.owens.com/tradescp/ci/cia04.txt>.] (February 19, 1995)

<sup>164</sup> FBIS-NES-95-058, "Tunisian Operations have Government Blessing", *AL-HAYAH* (March 24, 1995) p. 1.

groups active in both countries, any act that lessens the influence of Algeria's militants on their own populace would meet approval.

Within Algeria proper, the military rarely distinguishes between the militants and the general populace from which they draw their support. Although international coverage of the Algerian crisis is limited, there are a number of reports that accuse the government of, "executing hundreds of civilians who were suspected of sympathizing with or just being related to rebels . . . and stories related to the castration of captured rebels and the indiscriminate use of napalm."<sup>165</sup> As the 1996 *Amnesty International Human Rights Report* notes, "In Algeria, hundreds of people were known to have been extrajudicially executed by the security forces and government-backed militias. Many were reportedly killed in their homes in front of their families, when they posed no lethal threat."<sup>166</sup> From time to time, the military has been little better in its treatment of the general populace than the armed groups it opposes; a fact readily attested to by Lamari's admission that, "To fight the fundamentalists one has to be a bit like them oneself."<sup>167</sup>

Eradication policies gave the army a much more visible presence in Algeria, but provided little overall reduction in the level of violence. Its sole area of success was the temporary suppression of the armed group's ability to fight conventional war. When

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<sup>165</sup> Connelly, p. 33.

<sup>166</sup> Amnesty International, "1996 Human Rights Report", [<http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/ireport/ar96sum.html>]

<sup>167</sup> Connelly, p. 33.

the GIA and MIA attempted to move mass formations, or conduct large assaults on outlying towns and garrisons, the military was able to engage them quite well. Furthermore, Algeria's close ties to European governments gave them the ability to eliminate Islamic arms networks.<sup>168</sup>

In reality however, the eradication strategy has been largely ineffective in dealing with the irregular violence that accounts for most of the deaths in Algeria. As Mortimer notes, "Despite the government's large-scale offensives during the spring of 1995, the insurrection has not been crushed."<sup>169</sup> Very few of the 50,000 people killed in the course of the war died in battle. Instead, assassinations and bombings provide a slow but steadily rising toll. This type of violence relies upon components that are readily available from the general populace, or can be pilfered from government stocks. Attempts to limit access to such material has yielded few results.<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, the eradicator's harsh treatment of the general population prevented it from winning their support.

## **B. THE 1995 ELECTION: ALGERIA'S FUTURE**

Four years of continual conflict gave stark evidence to the reality that the policies of both the eradicators and the conciliators were inadequate for dealing with Algeria's crisis. With no end to societal violence in sight, the state's military masters had to find a new basis for their right to rule. Independent of the government, Algeria's major political

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<sup>168</sup> JPRS-TOT-95-003-0, "Czech Arms Allegedly Smuggled to Algerian Fundamentalists." *Der Spiegel*, (January 23, 1995) p. 15.

<sup>169</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algerian War", p. 39.

<sup>170</sup> Algeria OSAC Country Security Report.

parties had created an internationally hailed plan for national reconciliation. The Algerian government denounced the Rome conference as a “non-event for Algeria. . . ,” because it offered a role to the FIS, and would have forced the military’s removal from politics.<sup>171</sup> However, the military’s obstinance cost it a great deal of international legitimacy. Creditors such as the United Kingdom began to publicly state that, “The regime in Algiers cannot take it for granted that the West’s only option is continuation of that regime.”<sup>172</sup> If the Algerian military could not restore a facade of domestic support, its loss of legitimacy could cost it billions in international loans and foreign investments.

### **1. The Electoral Process**

The loss of international financial support would have had a catastrophic effect on the military’s ability to remain in power. Since it could not accept this loss, or the limitations on its power found in the Rome conference’s plan, the army was forced to embark on an entirely new course. The unexpected challenge from civil society helped to reunify the military against the threat of a political opposition. Since the military could not accept civil society’s plan, the only alternative was to outflank it. The national pact had promised a government of national reconciliation and eventual democratization. To win back international support, the army had to produce a plan that offered the ideas of the national pact without its actual substance. Thus, a mere two months after rejecting civil

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<sup>171</sup> Algeria OSAC Country Security Report.

<sup>172</sup> FBIS-NES-95-014, “EU Governments Rethinking Support”, *The Guardian*, (January 21, 1995) p. 11.



society's proposal, Zeroual announced the military's plan for political equilibration.

Presidential elections would be held in November 1995, with parliamentary elections following in 12-18 months.<sup>173</sup> This effectively negated the challenge from civil society. The validity of a 'democratic' electoral process would restore the regime's international legitimacy and reassure wary investors.

Despite its brutal treatment of the general populace, the military was confident that it could prevent Algeria from repeating the electoral mistake it made in 1991. International scrutiny ensured that the election was fairly administered, but the army made certain that it was not free. Prime Minister Mokdad Sifi admitted as much in March 1995 when he told reporters, "We are preparing the electoral lists . . . as soon as the president [Zeroual] approves the report we will take it to the transitional assembly. . . we hope to have a consensus in June."<sup>174</sup> Thus, the military determined not only which parties were allowed to run, but how and when they could campaign. This of course was designed to prevent the FIS or a successor movement from competing. Further simplifying matters for the military were the FFS's and FLN's decisions to boycott the election in accordance with the national pact.<sup>175</sup> Thus, the 1995 election took place in the absence of political parties accounting for more than 82 percent of the 1991 vote.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> FBIS-NES-95-058, "Zeroual: Local Elections to Follow Presidential Poll.", *Radio Algiers Network* (March 26, 1995)

<sup>174</sup> FBIS-NES-95-055, "Prime Minister Sifi on Economic Issues, Election Plans", *AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT*, (March 19, 1996) p. 3.

<sup>175</sup> Lara Marlowe, "Algeria: Ballots not Bullets", *Time* (November 27, 1995) p. 75.

<sup>176</sup> Mortimer, "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algeria War", p. 38.

To oppose the societal challengers, Liamine Zeroual ran as the military's candidate. Interestingly, his formal candidacy was not announced until a mere two months before the election. This delay is an excellent illustration of the narrow balance between eradicators and conciliators.<sup>177</sup> Zeroual needed to make certain that his candidacy would be supported by the officer corps before entering the race. Once his candidacy was approved by the rank and file, his election was guaranteed. In fact his only serious contender, former Prime Minister Rida Malik, was actually removed from the ballot in mid October for 'constitutional irregularities.'<sup>178</sup> Since Malik was a favorite of the eradicators, this act demonstrated to civil society that the military was once again united in its dealings with outsiders. With Malik removed from the race, Zeroual competed against representatives of three historically minor political parties. He handily won the election on November 16 1995, with an official tally of 61 percent of the vote.<sup>179</sup>

The realistic electoral returns played well with the international community, which contrasted the vote with that of Iraq. They noted that while the former offered a single candidate who received every vote, Algeria's election was "conducted under different banners. . . .with candidates bearing different agendas."<sup>180</sup> The apparently non-fraudulent returns gave the impression that the people were truly free to choose their own future.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

<sup>178</sup> "Yearly Chronology", *Middle East Journal*, (Winter 1996) p. 99.

<sup>179</sup> Marlowe, p. 74.

<sup>180</sup> Roddy Scott, "Algeria: Peace Remains Uncertain", *The Middle East* (January 1996) p. 6.

Observers from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations declared that the election had taken place in an atmosphere in which, “calmness, freedom and transparency prevailed.”<sup>181</sup> As *Human Rights Watch Middle East* noted the, “100 international election monitors present in Algeria are too limited in number and mandate to verify the accuracy of the results of the turnouts.”<sup>182</sup> The government’s pre-election maneuvering prevented the only real opposition within Algeria from participating. The San ‘Egidio signatories refused to offer candidates because the government program would not have allowed the FIS to participate.

The elections did offer one surprise. Despite strong pleas from the San ‘Egidio parties and harsh threats from the GIA, the general populace turned out to vote in large numbers to vote. Government statistics place participation at 75 percent, and in post-election interviews even FIS representatives admitted that the rate of participation exceeded 40 percent. The military chose to interpret the large turnout as a strong societal endorsement of its rule. Thus, the government felt that it had regained both international and domestic legitimacy. However, though the elections gained a great deal of international acclaim, Zeroual’s domestic mandate is far from certain.

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<sup>181</sup> FBIS-NES-95-223, “OAU Observers’ Delegation Issues Statement.”, *Algiers Radio Network* (November 18, 1995)

<sup>182</sup> Human Rights Watch Middle East. “Islamic Violence, Government Pressures Cast Shadow on Presidential Elections.” [gopher://gopher.igc.apc.org:5000/00/int /hrw/ mideast/algeria/5]

## 2. Post-Election Behavior

Prior to the election, Zeroual had given the populace the impression that he was interested in a political solution to the state's authority crisis. Throughout his tenure as interim President, he met with the FIS's imprisoned leadership on several different occasions in an attempt to iron out differences. Following the election however, Zeroual's behavior indicates that the government no longer supports this policy. His remarks in a May 1996 press conference serve as a good indicator of the conciliator's new approach:

The consequences of the crisis . . . is confusion between political practices and the exploitation not just of Islam but of all our values, and the basic elements of our character . . . If we want to bring our country out of this crisis . . . we must protect the basic elements of the national character from political manipulation because Islam is the religion of all Algerians . . . If anyone wants to go into politics, let them present a political program, economic program, and social program . . . but its basic element should not be religious, as no group has a monopoly.<sup>183</sup>

Thus, the election's high voter turnout and strongly displayed international support have given the government the belief that it can consolidate its power and co-opt civil society while continuing to suppress the political Islam offered by the FIS.

The danger with such a plan is that the populace may not have participated as a show of support for the military's rule. Instead, they might have actually taken Zeroual's pre-election behavior at face value and voted in an attempt to empower a government capable of negotiating a political solution. Indeed, the government should have been

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<sup>183</sup> FBIS-NES-96-089, "Algeria: Zeroual Answers Questions at News Conference." *Radio Algiers* (May 5, 1996)



worried by the official results of the presidential election. Zeroual handily won, but Mahfoud Nahanh of the HAMAS party (no connection to the Palestinian group of the same name) placed second with 26 percent of the vote.<sup>184</sup> This strong show of Islamic support purportedly showed the international community how fair the election was. However, it also demonstrates the weakness of the government's hold over the Algerian people.

Like the FIS, HAMAS was an Islamic-based political movement that emerged during Benjedid's initial liberalization. It ran on a platform of revivalist Islam, which meant, "The rejection of state-sponsored Islam in favor of political change through acculturation, socialization, and education."<sup>185</sup> Thus, the party sought to raise religious awareness in Algeria without an overt political agenda like the FIS. This kept it from being a threat to the establishment, but also prevented it from developing a broad base of support. In the 1991 parliamentary elections, it garnered a mere two percent of the vote.

Little had changed in the interim four and a half years. HAMAS still calls for the Islamization of society without any definite political agenda. Furthermore, while it has called for meaningful dialogue amongst all political movement, it has maintained fealty to the military government. Its behavior has led John Entelis to wonder if HAMAS is, "manipulated by the state in an effort to divide and conquer political Islam."<sup>186</sup> With little

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<sup>184</sup> Roberts, "Islamists, Soldiers and Democrats: The Second Algeria War" p. 38.

<sup>185</sup> John Entelis, "Political Islam in the Maghreb: The Nonviolent Dimension." in United States Congress. *"Hearings before the House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs Regarding Recent Developments in North Africa."* p. 84.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p 95.

change to the party's nature, what can account for its tenfold increase in electoral support? The answer is quite simple - HAMAS was the only Islamic party allowed to participate in the election. Since HAMAS had previously called for the re-legalization of the FIS, and a national reconciliation based on the San 'Egidio pact, it was able to draw from those sectors of Algerian society favorable to Islamization and national reconciliation.

Zeroual attempted to consolidate the military's victory by proposing a coalition government with his defeated electoral opponents. All three parties soon accepted.<sup>187</sup> This action was a harbinger of the current attempt to co-opt civil society. By bringing opposition parties supportive of the military into the government, Zeroual could increase the pressure on the secular political parties that had boycotted the election. Tame opposition parties like HAMAS have absolutely no power and minimal influence on government policy. However, access to the government means access to government run patrimonial networks. Thus, the power of these parties relative to the government has not changed, but their power relative to the political parties that boycotted the elections has increased dramatically.

By forming this coalition government, the military has succeeded in creating a wedge issue that could split the San 'Egidio signatories. With its international legitimacy restored via the elections, the minimal leverage that civil society possessed to pressure the

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<sup>187</sup> FBIS-NES-95-250, "Opposition Parties Accept Cabinet Role", *Paris Radio France International* (December 28, 1995)

government has dissipated. Future discourse would be in accordance with the government's plan instead of the San 'Egidio pact. If secular parties want to participate in future elections, they will have to eschew the national pact and break the political alliance with the FIS.<sup>188</sup> In March 1996, the FLN became the first major party to renege on the San 'Egidio pact. Claiming that, "the presidential election . . . has enhanced the legitimacy of the highest institution in the country," the party welcomed the opportunity to participate whenever the government convenes its national conference.<sup>189</sup> As of April 1996, the FFS and Ennahda had agreed to preliminary consultations toward a revision of the constitution prior to parliamentary elections.<sup>190</sup>

### **3. International Reaction**

In general the international community has been satisfied with the government's plan. The United States Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East, Robert Pelletreau, summed the international community's stance quite well when he testified that he was, "encouraged by President Zeroual's commitment to strengthen democratic pluralism in Algeria . . . a program of political inclusion, more aggressive economic reform, proactive security measures and continued marginalization of extremists provides

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<sup>188</sup> FBIS-NES-96-051, "Algeria: Consultations to Begin on Date for Legislative Elections." *Radio France International* (13 March 1996)

<sup>189</sup> FBIS-NES-96-043, "Algeria: FLN Committee Statement Condemns Violence, Hails Elections", *Radio Algiers Network* (March 2, 1996)

<sup>190</sup> FBIS-NES-96-075, "Algeria: President Receives Leaders of FFS, Ennahda Movement", *Radio Algiers Network* (April 16, 1996)

a basis for stability.”<sup>191</sup> Since the election gave Zeroual some domestic legitimacy, the international community felt it no longer needed to support the risky venture proposed by civil society. If Zeroual could consolidate his power and force the secular opposition to submit or face marginalization, then relations between Algeria and the international community could return to normal.

### **C. PROBABILITY OF EQUILIBRATION**

The problem however stems from the fact that the election was not the first step in a political transformation. Instead it was the restoration of legitimacy to the military-led regime. To properly evaluate its long-term success, the military’s plan must be subjected to two distinct questions; 1) Will the government’s plan lead to the democratization that the international community claims to support and 2) Will the regime’s actions lead to increased stability? At this juncture, political equilibration in Algeria is far from certain.

#### **1. Democratization**

As Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter note, the difference between hard-liners and soft-liners can be one of tactics instead of ideology.<sup>192</sup> Hard-liners focus on the cost of democratization and soft-liners focus on the price of repression, but both are motivated by the desire to preserve the military’s institutional interests. In Algeria’s case, the split between Eradicators and Conciliators developed largely from the fear that the

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<sup>191</sup> Robert Pellatreau. “Congressional Testimony on Recent Events in the Middle East and North Africa, June 16, 1996. [<http://www.uic.dos.fan/> rest of address!]

<sup>192</sup> Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter. “Opening Authoritarian Regimes.” *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, Prospects for Democracy*. Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) p. 37.



international community would fail to support military rule. Thus, the restoration of international legitimacy following Zeroual's election has helped to resolve their differences. With no external political threats, the military is free to seek equilibration in whatever manner it pleases.

Since the military is in control of Algeria, there is little question that it will attempt to install a political future that serves its own institutional interests. However, such motivations are not always self-serving. In cases such as the 1989 redemocratization of Chile, the military sought to install civilian leaders, "in order to protect its own fundamental corporate interests."<sup>193</sup> In seeking to avoid the high cost to its integrity posed by continual rule, the military will work toward the same goal as civil society; its extraction from the political process. This is clearly the outcome desired by the West. Unfortunately, it is also the one that is least likely to come to fruition.

This outcome results only when the military's corporate interests differ from the top leadership's political goals. In Algeria however, the army's traditional preeminence amongst the state's political elites has blurred the line between the two sets of interests. In their minds fulfilling the military's political goals satisfies the corporate goals. As Alfred Stephan writes, "If it is not perceived to be in the interests of the military-as-corporate-institution to extricate itself from power . . . [equilibration] may fail because of

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<sup>193</sup> Alfred Stephan, "Paths toward Redemocratization." *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, Prospects for Democracy*. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) p. 74.

. . . military resistance and no actual transfer of power may occur.”<sup>194</sup> In such a situation, the military is more likely to capture the political system than to disengage from it. The army will use the electoral process to establish and legitimize its hegemonic rule instead of equilibrating democracy. Instead of returning control of politics to society, it will seek to keep society under its control.

Despite its stated goal of a pluralistic political system, the military’s behavior vis-à-vis civil society shows that it is not interested in democratization. Its desired system would have a thin veneer of popular participation to provide cover to the continuation of the military-controlled government. To this end, while the government has held negotiations with various opposition groups, its goal has not been the formation of any real form of coalition government. Instead of sharing power, the government has organized talks only to split and weaken the civil opposition united by the San ‘Egidio pact. It wants to use its newfound international legitimacy, and renewed access to foreign capital to force the major secular opposition groups into subordinate positions while using its military muscle to obliterate the moderate political Islam of the FIS. It is an attempt to recreate the iron triangle of the FLN with a multi-party political wing. If secular political parties accept military control, they could gain access to the state distribution networks enjoyed by the political and bureaucratic wings of the FLN prior to the crisis of 1989. In return they would cease to function as a real political opposition.

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid, p. 76.

Despite the commitment to discuss future elections, it is unlikely that long-suffering opposition parties would commit to such an arrangement. Secular opposition groups such as the FFS were arranged around specific goals, such as recognition of the cultural rights of Algeria's Berber minority. The only way to co-opt these groups will be for the government to acquiesce to their social demands. However, the government does not have to co-opt the entirety of the political opposition. Merely weakening it to the point where it cannot challenge the state politically would be sufficient. With signatories such as the revamped FLN willing to sell out their partners for a piece of the action, the government has a real chance of destroying the San 'Egidio pact.

## **2. Stability**

In reality, the end of the San 'Egidio pact will pose new dangers for Algeria. The pact offered a role for political Islam that is not to be found in the government's plan. Attempting to equilibrate the system without a role for Islamic movements will introduce the probability of a high level of instability. The government believed that proper co-optation of civil society will negate the need to negotiate with the Islamists, despite the FIS's initial recognition of Zeroual's electoral legitimacy. The government's control over the secular opposition will allow the military to treat political Islam the same way as militant Islam. It can use the tame opposition of HAMAS to present a facade of Islamic participation while completely suppressing the FIS.

In this, the government presupposes that the only available option for FIS supporters is a reluctant acceptance of the military's plan for political equilibration.

However, the government's control over Islamic sympathizers is far from complete. In fact, should the FIS become isolated politically, the odds are that its moderating influence over the Islamic opposition would decrease significantly. The emergence of the GIA has already marginalized the FIS's control over its military wing. With no hope of participating in the system, the FIS could lose significant levels of support. However, instead of transferring their loyalty to the government, these supporters are more likely to switch their allegiance to the Islamic militants.

If this were merely a small sector of Algerian society, then the risk would be negligible. The government would have to deal with a temporary increase in the number of terrorist incidents, but the military's increased vulnerability would soon lead to their demise. In Algeria however, political Islam still commands a strong level of support. Isolating the moderates of the FIS would significantly weaken the party, but there is no guarantee that the rank and file would then accept the military's plan. Indeed, by weakening those who advocate change within the system, the government aids those who seek its destruction. As Juan Linz notes, "The reequilibration model is only possible when the semi-loyal opposition is capable of controlling and neutralizing a disloyal opposition."<sup>195</sup> Weakening the FIS only strengthens the GIA. By concentrating attempting to co-opt the secular political opposition while ignoring the FIS, the government has introduced a dangerous amount of instability to the system.

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<sup>195</sup> Linz, p. 88.



Furthermore, while it is attempting to establish political dominance over the secular opposition, the military's hold on the general populace is less than firm. Algeria faces huge socio-economic problems; a young steadily increasing population, high unemployment, a severe housing shortage, and a high concentration of wealth in the government. These are the root issues that led to the public's disenchantment with the FLN in the late 1980's, yet the government is doing little to address them.

As a result, there is already evidence to show that while the political class is willing to negotiate, the general populace is as apprehensive of the government's plan as it is of an Islamic Algeria. To secure its massive world bank loans, the government promised to rid itself of the large inefficient parastatals that dominate the Algerian economy. However, these companies are ripe plums for the distribution of petty favors, and the introduction of sweetheart deals between government officials and foreign businessmen. Thus, once again the government is playing its interests off against those of the small but extremely important private sector.<sup>196</sup> Uneven taxation, and government subsidization of state owned corporations will only alienate those sectors of the economy where private wealth exists. In 1991, similar policies led the merchants to shift their support to the FIS. In a future Algeria without a channel for dissent, the probability that this support will go towards armed resistance will increase markedly.

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<sup>196</sup> FBIS-NES-96-080. "Algeria: Employers Alarmed at Delays in Liberalization of Economy." *Liberte*. (April 13, 1996) p. 2.

#### **D. EUROPEAN CONCERNS**

Europe should be extremely concerned by the military government's actions. As demonstrated by the 5 August 1996 assassination of the French-born Archbishop of Oran, the government's plan has not weakened support for the GIA.<sup>197</sup> Claiming to support the San 'Egidio pact and then switching to back the government's proposal may satisfy Europe's short-term economic interests, but it dramatically increases the stakes for its security considerations. The political and economic cover provided to Zeroual's government creates the perception that European nations are co-belligerents. Islamists have a long memory and Europe will be held equally accountable for the FIS's failure to achieve power through peaceful means. Further bombings in Europe, and increased targeting of European nationals in North Africa are likely. The only question is whether America's non-committal but pro-government stance will also produce targeting of American interests.

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<sup>197</sup> Gail Chaddock. "Mixed Message from Paris to Algiers: Iron Barricades and \$1 Billion in Aid." *Christian Science Monitor*. (August 5, 1996) p. A 2.

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## **VII. PREDICTIVE CONCLUSIONS**

The Algerian conflict remains unresolved. Although the presidential elections have allowed the military to regain the support of the international community, there is little evidence that its plan will be able to capture the general populace. The plan serves the interests of the military and bureaucratic elites instead the general populace. As such it is less of a political transformation than a reinstatement of the previous political system and its accompanying instability. Should the military succeed, it is likely that the conflict will continue unabated.

### **A. THE RETURN OF THE IRON TRIANGLE**

The military plan attempts to suppress and co-opt civil society while destroying the moderates of the FIS. The clearest evidence of this is the army's post-election behavior vis-à-vis civil society. Whenever possible, it has attempted to separate the two spheres of political opposition. Secular parties can either accept a subordinate role in the future political system or face being legislated out of existence. Meanwhile, political Islam continues to be brutally suppressed. Despite the FIS's post-San 'Egidio pledge to end political violence and respect the rights of other political movements, the government has steadfastly refused to include the party in its negotiations. Indeed, President Zeroual and his top military advisors have openly called for a rewrite of the 1989 constitution prior to the national parliamentary elections tentatively scheduled for Fall 1997, an act clearly designed to prevent a FIS challenge.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> FBIS-NES-96-081. "Algeria: Review of Constitution May Be on Agenda of Consultations." *El Watan*. (April 11, 1996) p. 3.



In place of democracy, the army's dominance is likely to lead to the reemergence of the iron triangle. The troika of party-bureaucracy-military would once again rule Algeria, balancing the demands of the state's political elites against the needs of the general populace. The only difference being the alteration of the patronage networks to include the co-opted leaders of the secular political leaders in the triangle's political wing. The military would still maintain control over the workings of the government, and remain the true source of power in Algeria. The inclusion of opposition movements would provide the facade of democracy while in reality no power would actually change hands. The result will be political equilibration with the same systemic flaws that doomed the previous regime in 1989.

Such an arrangement might be able to capture the state's political elites, but it is unlikely to placate the general populace. Co-opting the political elites will bring temporary stability, but it does little to address the basic issues that led society to rebel against the system in the first place. Thirty years of incompetent socialism and five years of civil war or strife have left their mark on the populace. While the common people want peace and stability, they also desire equality and justice. In light of past governmental truculence, such behavior would play into the hands of the radical Islamists. The attempt to socially ignore and politically suppress the Islamists is very dangerous; the unincorporated sector of the population will be too large to suppress, and the government will have limited resources to control it. With the secular opposition discredited, and political Islam suppressed, the only readily available outlet for dissent will be armed resistance.

Despite this, the government will probably be able to enact its flawed equilibration because of the strong support it receives from the international community. The symbiotic dependence between Europe and Algeria allows the former to exercise a great deal of influence on the latter. The historical economic ties between Europe and the Algerian government, as well as Western fear of political Islam, have led to strong economic and political support for the military regime during the transition period. Acts such as the United State's Export-Import Bank's August 1996 decision to restore short and medium cover to Algerian investments, show the political opposition that the international community is unwilling to support their positions.<sup>199</sup> This helps to marginalize the politically-based opposition. With the international community supporting the government, opposition leaders will be forced to acquiesce to whatever proposals the government offers, or witness the loss of their supporters and materiel as their followers abandon their cause in favor of more radical solutions.

Indeed, the ironic part of the government's plan is that it will produce more support for radical jihad than the GIA could have ever mustered on its own. Co-opting the secular political opposition and suppressing the moderate Islam of the FIS will leave armed resistance as the only available method of obtaining power. When this occurs, the GIA will be the group with the training, organizational capacity, and ideology to

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<sup>199</sup> "Eximbank Restores Medium-Term Cover." *Middle East Economic Digest*. (August 23, 1996) p. 18.

spearhead the movement. Unless Western support is transferred from the regime to society, the next Algerian political crisis will result in the empowerment of radical Islam.

## **B. EUROPEAN CONCERNS**

The West has been supportive of the military's plan for equilibration because of its fear of Islam in Algeria. Western behavior indicates that the international community felt that any act that weakened the regime would only aid radical groups like the GIA. Thus, while the San 'Egidio conference received strong international praise, civil society received little in the way of tangible support. Whenever necessary, the West has interceded politically and economically to assist the military. This support is intended to strengthen the military vis-à-vis military Islamists, but it also has the effect of weakening civil society. In effect, it can marginalize the moderate opposition as the line between government loyalists and radical militants solidifies. In the case of Algeria, Western behavior will give the government a much better chance of bending civil society to its will, but a much lower chance of maintaining its support.

Since European support is a key factor in determining the outcome, the question must be asked as to whether or not its interests are truly served in the military plan. Europe has endeavored to help the military government because of its reliance upon Algerian natural gas for its energy needs, and the fear of what would result from a radical Islamic government on its periphery. However, while the military plan will definitely assist European states with their short-term economic goals, it places their long-term political goals in doubt. The marginalization of the FIS, and the co-optation of secular opposition

parties will only strengthen the positions of radical Islamic groups such as the GIA. When society's expectations are unfulfilled, the politicians will have been compromised by their compliance, and the radicals will have a much greater legitimacy. As a result, when Algeria implodes again, the result will be the collapsed state that Europe feared would emerge if the FIS had been allowed to take power in 1991. By acquiescing to the military's plan to protect its short term interests, Western government put their long-term interests in grave jeopardy.

### **C. A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE**

However, Algeria does not have to be a problem with a binary solution. Although the political process is threatened by both the military and the radical Islamists, there is a centrist alternative that could function if it received enough support. Instead of attempting to preserve the status quo in Algeria, the international community should undertake a pragmatic policy that would minimize the cost of regime transition. With this in mind, the best alternative would be the formation of a national pact that gave all political factions, including those Islamists willing to forego violence, the ability to participate within the system.

Opening the system to whatever parties wish to participate will have two distinct effects. First, it will serve to marginalize the radicals that reject the democratic process entirely. Strengthening the capacities of the moderates in the FIS who are willing to work through the political system will help to lower the capacities of radicals such as the GIA that seek to destroy it. When opposition groups acquire a stake in the political system,



their followers will gain the opportunity to present their grievances and freely participate in the political process. This gives the system legitimacy, lowering the desire to seek radical changes to its nature. Secondly, such a system will force leaders to accept political compromise with other parties to successfully advance their agenda. By placing political Islam within the constraints of a democratic system, its leaders would be forced to respect the rights of secular political parties, and accept political compromises to secure the votes necessary to advance their agenda. The key is to frame political Islam as simply one facet of equilibration. Support should be provided through the context of empowering civil society and the political opposition including the Islamists, instead of directly endorsing the FIS.

Luckily the groundwork for such a path has already been established; the Platform of Rome that resulted from the San 'Egidio conference is the medium through which the international community should work to resolve Algeria's failing equilibration. The San 'Egidio conference secured promises from opposition groups ranging from the pro-Berber FFS to the Islamic FIS to respect basic rights such as democratic elections, an end to political violence, and respect for basic human rights. Furthermore, its signatories represented more than 85% of the 1991 parliamentary elections. However, its acceptance of a role for political Islam, and its call for an end to the military's role in Algerian politics has thus far made it unacceptable. The military refused to consider the proposal because of its own institutional interests while the international community offered only lukewarm support for fear of an Islamic government coming to power.

As a result of minimal international commitment, the government has been able to undertake a policy designed to divide and conquer the San 'Egidio signatories. It is attempting to assimilate the parties that agree with its policies, repress those that refuse, while seeking the military destruction of political Islam. This plan exists because of Europe's tolerance. As demonstrated by the 1995 Presidential elections, when international support is conditioned upon government behavior, the regime has been willing to undertake minimal political reform. In light of the government's truculence, it is time for the international community to once again force the military regime onto a path toward democratization. This would be best accomplished by switching support toward the political opposition and the Platform of Rome. While the end to the special relationship between Europe and Algeria will probably mean higher export costs for Algerian gas and oil, the stability it would produce will ensure its continued flow. The post-San 'Egidio FIS promised to work within the democratic process, and respect the rights of other political parties. Properly constrained by an active political opposition, and a strong civil society, an Algeria that numbers the FIS amongst its political elites would be a far better alternative than the ascension of uncompromising revolutionaries like the GIA.

#### **D. AMERICAN POLICY OPTIONS**

Since the key to resolving the Algerian conflict is the transfer of international support from the government to civil society, the United States should evaluate its ties to the current regime. Policies such as the aforementioned restoration of medium term export cover, or Undersecretary of State Robert Pellatreau's May 1996 visit to Algeria

strengthen the government at the expense of the loyal political opposition, not the radicals of the GIA. Since the carrot has proven inadequate, the United States must be prepared to use the stick to force Algeria to deal fairly with the political opposition, including the FIS. Continued financial and political support must be contingent upon government respect for human rights, free elections, and open political participation.

Algeria requires a realistic approach. While the United States may be loathe to directly endorse the political Islam of the FIS, it cannot be party to its destruction either. The United States should move beyond mere words to convince its European allies that democratization in Algeria is not akin to Shia revolution in Iran, and that within the confines of a strong civil society, the FIS's leaders will be a moderating influence in resolving the conflict. As this thesis has demonstrated, the political Islam offered by the FIS is not a direct threat to the United States or its European. In fact, the possibility of systemic failure in Algeria exists because of the international community's tolerance for artificial restrictions on political determination. With the excesses of political Islam constrained by a strong civil society, Islamic leaders will be forced to build coalitions, and seek compromises in order to advance their most pressing pieces of legislation. The key is to frame political Islam as simply one facet of equilibration. Support should be provided through the context of empowering civil society and the political opposition, including the FIS.

Political equilibration in Algeria will emerge only if the United States and its European allies are willing to pressure Zeroual's government to compromise instead of

conquer. While the result of this will be the empowerment of an Algerian government less willing to accede to European economic interests, its legitimacy would produce long-term stability, ending European fears of a mass exodus of Algerians northward, and paving the way for a long overdue détente. Should the international community fail to realize the need to force the government to deal with the political opposition, the opportunity presented by the Platform of Rome will be remembered as a lost opportunity as Algeria disintegrates under the strain of continual civil war.



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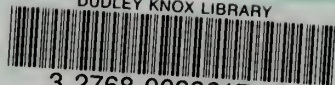
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